

Glasgow Gown with Three Bands on Each Sleeve

Continued research leads to a new finding of an old image showing a gown which has not been seen in at least four decades, *writes Neil Dickson*

In my history of the academic dress of the University of Glasgow I recorded that major changes to gowns and hoods took place in 1893.¹ When the proposals for the various degrees were under consideration by a committee, the University Court instructed the committee to design a gown for its members.² However no design appeared. In 1901 a new committee was appointed³ with the result that in 1902 the following design was approved: ‘a black doctor’s gown with collar and yoke and faced all with MA silk and with three bands of MA silk on each sleeve’.⁴

Primary Source

Wherein a Fellow’s expertise and the outside world meet

The gown never appeared in the academic dress code in the University Calendar. Its use died out probably soon after 1945 and certainly by 1974.⁵ Aside from the description, no actual gown or image of it was thought to have survived.

The accompanying illustration is taken from a colour slide recently discovered at the University of Glasgow. It shows Mr George Bradley wearing the gown that used to be worn by members of Court. With its three silk bands on each sleeve (the lowest band on the left sleeve being obscured in the illustration except for an edge by the way the sleeve is hanging) its appearance is distinctly more American than Scottish.

According to Dr Robert T. Hutcheson (Secretary of the University Court and Registrar) writing c. 1945 it was normally worn only by members of the Court who did not hold a degree.⁶ (The Court includes external appointees such as the Chancellor’s Assessor and representatives of the City of Glasgow who often do not hold degrees.) The slide is one of a set⁷ dating from the 1950s⁸ by which time the gown may have ceased to be used.⁹

1 Dickson, Neil. ‘Tradition and Humour: The Academic Dress of the University of Glasgow’, *TBS*, 12 (2012), pp. 10–35 (p. 21).

2 Glasgow University Court Minutes, 28 April 1892, Archive Services, Minutes of Meetings of the University Court, reference C1/1.

3 Glasgow University Court Minutes, 14 Nov. 1901.

4 Glasgow University Court Minutes, 13 Feb. 1902.

5 Personal recollection: I joined the staff in 1974 and never saw it.

6 Hutcheson, Robert T. *Notes on Academic Dress in the University of Glasgow* (unpublished typescript c. 1945 with later handwritten additions), University of Glasgow Archives, p. 29.

7 University of Glasgow, Hunterian Museum, Slides of Academic Dress worn by Mr George Bradley, reference C.1986.8.

8 The evidence for the date is that the slides include the BVMS hood that was approved in 1953 (see Neil Dickson (2012), p. 21) and are NEBRO transparencies, <http://camera-wiki.org/wiki/Neville_Brown_&_Company_Ltd> [accessed 3 July 2015].

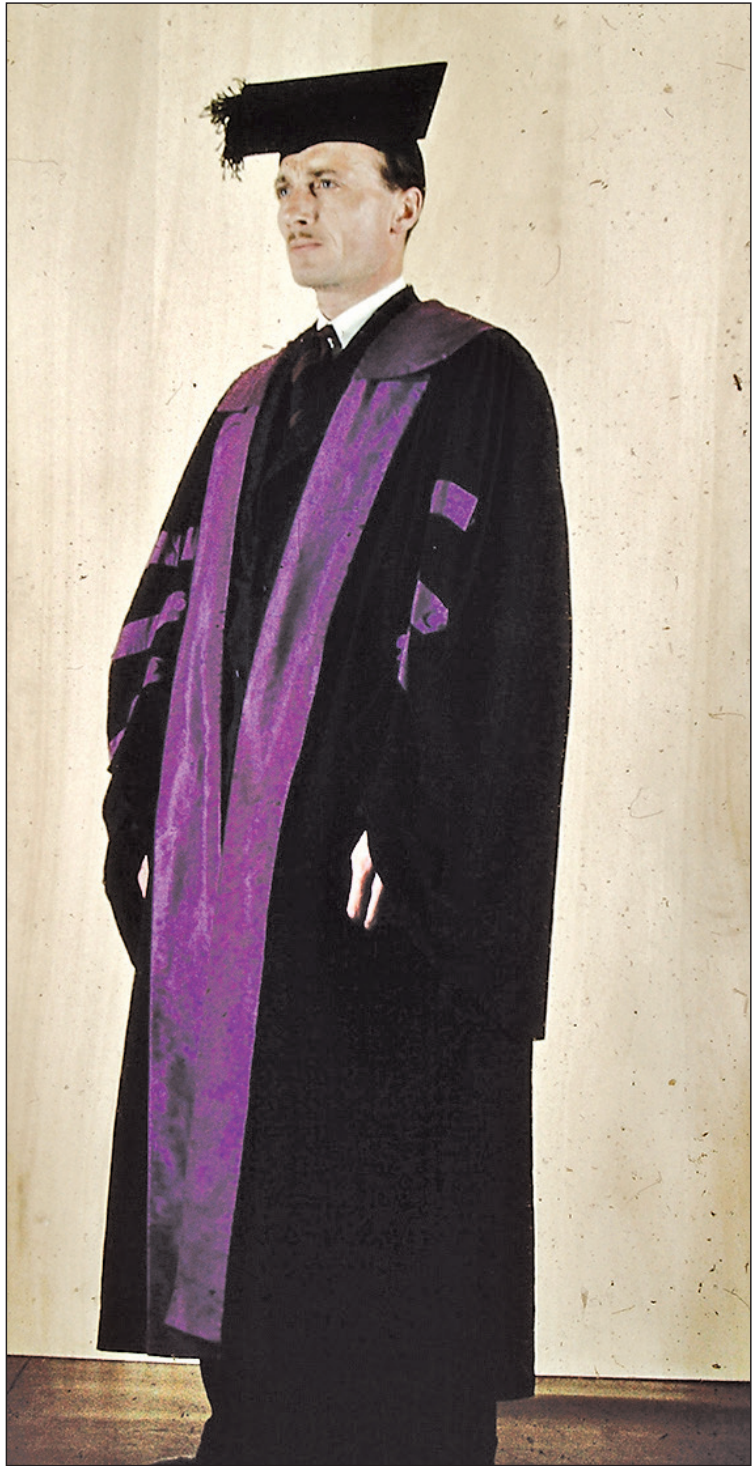
9 One of the other slides is of a gown that was out of use by that date, namely the Registrar’s gown. It is in the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, and its use is believed to have ceased in 1942. Neil Dickson (2012), p. 26.

Mr George Bradley, who acted as the model in the slides, had an interesting career. He started work for the University of Glasgow in the 1930s as an office boy, became a junior clerk and, after army service during World War II, rose through administrative positions to be an Assistant Secretary of the University Court.¹⁰ His duties latterly included responsibility for HR matters and I vividly recall a discussion with him in April 1975 over a problem with my contract!

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Dr Sally-Anne Coupar (Curator of Archaeology, Ethnology and Historical Collections, The Hunterian, University of Glasgow) who discovered the slides, alerted me and gave me permission to scan them, and Claire Daniel (Assistant Archivist, Archive Services, University of Glasgow) who facilitated the scanning.

¹⁰ Hutcheson, Robert T. and Conway, Hugh. *The University of Glasgow 1920-1974: The Memoir of Robert T. Hutcheson* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Library, 1997), pp. 16, 110.



The gown of the University Court of Glasgow, designed in 1902, in a recently discovered, undated slide.