

# Lyme Regis Regalia

A brief description and history of the Lyme Regis Civic Regalia

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## Lyme Regis Regalia - The Mayoral Chain

King Edward VII came to the throne on 22nd January 1901 on the death of his mother, Queen Victoria.

On 30th April 1902 the Lyme Regis Borough Council formed a Coronation Committee to coordinate the celebration of the forthcoming Coronation scheduled for the 26th June. The committee proposed that the Town purchase, by public subscription, a 'Chain of Office' for the Mayor at a cost of £100.

Unfortunately, King Edward was diagnosed with appendicitis just two days before the Coronation so it had to be postponed. Sir Frederick Treves performed the then-radical operation assisted by Sir Joseph Lister (Baron Lister of Lyme Regis). The next day, King Edward was sitting up in bed, smoking a cigar. Two weeks later it was announced that the

King was out of danger so the coronation was re-scheduled for the 9th August.



On Coronation Day the Borough Council Minutes record that a Public Meeting was attended by the Mayor J.R.C. Talbot Esq together with all the Aldermen and Councillors. The new chain was then presented, the Mayor being invested with the Chain of Office 'to be worn by him and his successors in the office of Mayor of this Borough'.

There then followed a free dinner for the town's men 'on weekly wages' at a cost to the Council of 1s 9d per head; for the women 'young and old' there was a free tea, this costing the Council just 6 1/2d per head! The following day there was a tea and sports day for the children.

*The Mayor's Chain of Office*

The Chain of Office is the one still in use today. It comprises twenty six gold lifesaving belts each inset with a sailing ship, separated by gold 'LR' links.

At the centre of the inner 'swag', or chain, is a pendant with a bust of Queen Victoria and the words 'In Memoriam'.

The main gold pendant depicts, at its centre, the town's Coat of Arms and the words 'Borough of Lyme Regis incorporated 1284'. The reverse is inscribed 'Presented to the Borough of Lyme Regis, in commemoration of the glorious reign of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria on the occasion of the Coronation of the King Edward VII June 1902'. *Have you spotted the error?*



*The Mayor's Pendant*

Since 1902 the Mayoral Chain has been frequently updated. The back of each belt is engraved with the name and date of a Mayor. In addition there are three gold and enamel Royal cyphers for Edward VII, Edward VIII and George V. The two gold pendants are for George VI and Queen Elizabeth II.



## Lyme Regis Regalia - The Mayoress' Chain

The Lyme Regis Mayoress' chain is worn by the Mayor's consort, of whichever gender, when accompanying the Mayor on civic occasions.

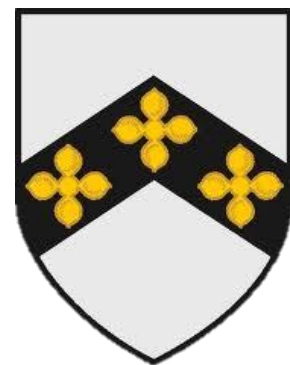
The 18ct gold chain comprises fourteen linked gold shells, three enamelled Coats of Arms and a pendant medallion. The reverse of each shell is engraved with the name and date of the period of appointment. The middle Coat of Arms is that of Lyme Regis; the other two relate to the Eyre family. The large medallion depicts the Lyme Regis Common Seal. The reverse is inscribed 'Mayoress of Lyme Regis, given by Alderman Rev. G.F. Eyre, Mayor, (15 and 16 Geo V Chap 54) Jan 1927'.



*The Mayoress' Chain of Office*

The Reverend Eyre's many philanthropic gifts included 'Hernlea' in Pound Road for conversion to the Town's Cottage Hospital. Today the G F Eyre Charitable Trust continues his legacy with financial support for many projects in the town.

The Reverend G F Eyre retired to Lyme Regis. He was closely involved in many of the town's developments, such as the establishment of the Electric Light Company in the 1920s. In 1921, he was a founder member of the Lyme Regis Sailing club. He first became Mayor in 1926.



*The Eyre family Coat of Arms*

## Lyme Regis Regalia - The Ancient Mace

A mace was, historically, a heavy club, usually having a metal head and spikes. Maces were carried by macebearers when in procession with the Mayor, being used to defend the Mayor from attack by brigands and the like. In Lyme Regis today, two maces are carried by macebearers when accompanying the Mayor on civic duties but the role of both mace and macebearer is now purely ceremonial.

Most interestingly, Lyme Regis also has a smaller Ancient Mace that has, for centuries, been carried by the Mayor in procession.



*Fig 1*  
*The Lyme Regis Ancient Mace*

The 46cm long Ancient Mace is an iron rod with silver casing along its length. The fluted iron grip had eight flanges (two are now missing) and an engraved brass end button. (*Fig 1*). The head is shaped like the seed vessel of a poppy with ornate silver and gilt decoration including the Royal Coat of Arms of the Stuart sovereigns and the inscription 'IACOBUS DEGRA MAGNE BRITANIE FRAN ET HIB REX' (*James by the Grace of God King of Great Britain, France and Ireland*). This would date the mace from between 1603 and 1625. However, this description and dating reveals only the 'recent' history.

In 1886 the mace was loaned by the Lyme Regis Borough Council to the Society of Antiquities of London for a major exhibition.



A full description and drawing of the mace (*Fig 2*) was given in the Proceedings of the Society. It proposed that the design of the mace points to a date *circa* 1530, indicating that the James I silver disc of this mace is a replacement of the original Tudor coat of arms. In the 16th Century the 'Sergeant's Mace' design was evolving from a war mace to a purely decorative ceremonial role and this is an early example.

A war mace (*Fig 3*) was a single handed weapon used to crush the armour of ones opponent. The flanged head was for greater penetration.

*Fig 2*  
*19th Century drawing of*  
*Lyme Regis mace*

*Courtesy of the Society of*  
*Antiquities of London*

*Fig 3*  
*Medieval War*  
*Mace*



In 1559 Queen Elizabeth renewed the Town's Charter and, for the first time, it included the right to appoint two Sergeants of Mace bearing silver gilt maces. This right was sometimes granted to regularise an existing situation. It is therefore probable that the Town's Ancient Mace is one of these, the other since lost. The tradition of this mace being carried by the Mayor may well have started two centuries later when the Town adopted the two new Silver Maces.

Five hundred years of ceremonial use have worn away some of the original detail and the circumstances surrounding the loss of the two flanges remain unknown.

This important mace is one of the oldest in the country continuing into yet another century its ceremonial role of protecting the Mayor of Lyme Regis.



## Lyme Regis Regalia - The Pair of Silver Maces

The pair of identical George II Silver Maces are 83cm long. They are carried at the head of mayoral processions by the Town's macebearers.



Each mace head has four engraved faces. One face shows the Lyme Regis Coat of Arms. The second bears the Coat of Arms of the Fane family with an additional gold crescent (denoting the second son). The third face is inscribed 'John Fane, Mayor, 3 October 1757', and the fourth 'The Gift of Thomas Fane Esq, 1757'. The head of each mace is a crown and orb with, inset, the Coat of Arms of King George II. The Coats of Arms on the maces were originally coloured but over the years the colours have been polished away.



*Lyme Regis  
Coat of Arms*



*Fane family  
Coat of Arms*



*King George II  
Coat of Arms*

Made by William Shaw and William Priest of London the Silver Maces were commissioned by Thomas Fane to celebrate the appointment of his son, John, as Mayor of Lyme Regis. In 1762 Thomas Fane resigned as MP for Lyme Regis to take up the title of Earl of Westmorland with John Fane immediately following his father as MP.

The Fane family was a significant force in English politics with over fifty members elected as MPs.

For almost a century before the 1832 Reform Act the two Members of Parliament for Lyme Regis were always members of the Fane family even though they never owned property locally. This continuity was achieved through domination of the Borough Council and of those entitled to vote. The Fane family history began with Ivon Vane, a Welsh landowner and mercenary captain in the service of the Black Prince. Known by the English as John Fane he was one of three captains who captured King John II of France at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. The king surrendered by laying down his gauntlet. John Fane was knighted and granted a Coat of Arms comprising three gauntlets. His share in the ransom monies, which took the French people eight years to raise, made him very wealthy. He settled in Kent and one branch of his family later became the Earls of Westmoreland.



## Lyme Regis Regalia – The Town Seal and Coat of Arms

A seal at the bottom of a document is a legal instrument of authentication. Originally this was an impression in wax but, since the 19th Century, seals have usually been embossed in paper.

The town's brass seal matrix is 52mm in diameter mounted in silver plate with a turned wooden handle. (*Fig 1*)



*Fig 1*  
*The Lyme Regis Seal*



*Fig 2*  
*Impression of the Lyme Regis Seal*

The Seal of Lyme Regis (*Fig 2*) shows a cob, a single masted merchant ship of the late 13th century, with a pennon at the masthead depicting the Cross of St. George. On the sides of the mast are two banners: one with the three lions of England, the other with a castle and a lion rampant. These were the arms of King Edward I and his first wife, Queen Eleanor of Castile. At the bow of the vessel the Crucifixion is shown with the Virgin and St. John. At the stern is St. Michael, patron saint of Lyme Regis, holding a crozier and slaying the dragon. On his left arm is a shield with the Cross of St. George. On the border appear the sun, moon and a star with the words 'Sigillum Commune De Lim' (*Common Seal of Lim*).

The oldest surviving impression of this seal is on a document dated 1398.



In heraldic language the town's Coat of Arms is described as 'two bars wavy azure, on a chief gules a lion passant guardant'. An early example is a carving in the Parish Church of St Michael dating from around 1490.

*Fig 3*  
*The Lyme Regis Coat of Arms*

Both the Seal and the Coat of Arms probably date from about 1284 when King Edward I granted Lyme Regis its first Charter.