

ROYAL RUFFS

By Harriet B. Martin

In the 16th Century, clothing was dark and often richly encrusted. As a welcome contrast, delicate, frothy ruffs fairly offset the heavy aspect. Such a refreshing touch at the throat added sparkle.

Frilled collars became more and more elaborate and developed into the



Elizabethan ruff. What began as a small, pleated ruffle on the shirt collars of the very early 16th Century, ended as large wheel-like collars, requiring specialized tools to keep them pleated. Only the very rich could afford the expense in linen, lace, materials and upkeep.

The Elizabethan ruff was one of the



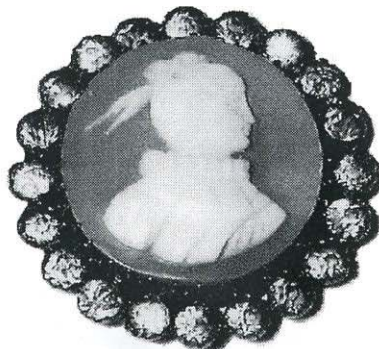
Mary I 1516-1558, Queen 1553-1558 (Daughter of Henry VIII & Catherine of Aragon) House of Tudor. Casein. Collection of Nikki Deal



Mary Queen of Scots. Molded black glass with a dull finish, cemented into a black glass button with a bright-polished rim. BM: "Pat'd Dec 28 1880"



Mary Queen of Scots. Stamped brass, pierced and mounted inside wide brass borders with a stamped florets design. Cut steels in each floret. Includes the arms of Mary with the rose and thistle.



Prong set in metal with prong-set paste border. Div I. Collection of Harriet Martin



The high ruff with an open neck for women was constructed on gauze wings which were raised at the back of the head. Ruffs were pinned into place and often attached to partlets. The pleat or flute of a ruff was called a Purl which were sometimes edged with fine lace. Ruffs were sometimes added to the cuffs of sleeves. Laces or strings, called Band Strings, were attached to the opening of a ruff which were tied together to secure the ruff or band around the neck. (from the Elizabethan Era Organization)

most recognizable items of Elizabethan Fashion.

Ruffs, or ruffles, started as a high frilled collar. Fashion then changed and dictated a more feminine and seductive image for women, which resulted in opening the ruff in front to expose the neck and the top of the breasts.



Elizabeth I 1533-1603, Queen 1558-1603 Daughter of Henry VIII and Ann Boeyn House of Tudor. Amino. Collection of Nikki Deal



Mary Queen of Scots. Brass escutcheon on a chased brass cup. Original red tint. Div I. Small. Collection of Janet Scheetz Gerhardt



Lady Wearing a Hennin (conical head covering fashionable from the late 14th to the early 15th centuries) and a small early ruff. Gothic tracery in the background and small quatrefoil windows in the border continue the gothic theme. A well-made, one-piece stamped and tinted brass button with the shank on a bar across the back and fixed under the rolled rim. Reproduced in white metal in the 1950s.



Ivory set in metal. Division I. Collection of Cathy Lindauer

Ruffs framed the face and dictated the hairstyles of the age, which were short for men and swept up for women.

Of course, conforming to the prevalent style was a must for those wishing to socially advance themselves or maintain social status.

Portraits of reigning queens of the era showed ruffs in plenty. Damsels and dames seemed to blossom above their ruffs as both sexes benefited equally.

Achieving this airy elegance was no simple matter. Households of the wealthy required the help of a deft



Unidentified head of a man in a late 16th century costume.



Mary Stuart. Yellow metal (probably brass) with a pearl background and set in metal. Division I. Collection of Cathy Lindauer



Queen Elizabeth II. One-piece metal from 1953-54. BM: REDG. DESIGN (see above left). 1 3/4" Collection of Janet Scheetz Gerhardt

During the Elizabethan era, pamphlets were printed and distributed commenting on life. A writer of one such pamphlet was a well traveled Londoner called Philip Stubbes. He was well educated and a strict Elizabethan Puritan, holding views on any social practices which, in his view, were unfitting for true Christians. He named his work "The Anatomie of Abuses" in which he strongly criticized many of the fashions and clothing worn during the Elizabethan era. The pamphlet was recorded in the Stationers' Register on 1 March 1583. From his writing regarding ruffs, we can confirm that:

- * Ruffs were made of varying expensive, fine linens (Holland, Lawne, and Camerick),
- * Starch was used to maintain the ruffs,
- * Supports and under-props kept the ruffs in place
- * Almost everyone had three or four ruffs
- * Ruffs were decorated with lace, gold and silver thread and fine silk
- * Ruffs varied in length & style, and could be pinned up to the ears or laid over the shoulder.



Three brass heads with adorned hats and ruffs on a chased brass cup. Riveted steel crescent embellishment. Division I. Collection of Harriet Martin



One-piece stamped brass. Collection of Harriet Martin.

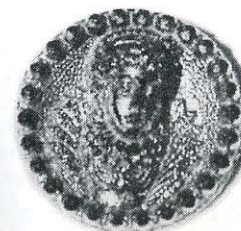
pair of hands behind the scenes, to "goffer" these collars.

Goffering was the art of shaping the crimps and flutes that made up a ruff. A special goffering tool was used, in the form of a rod or baton, to work the fine cambric or linen into shape.

Elizabeth of England is said to have greatly encouraged lace making in her choice of ever more elaborate neckwear.

After her death, Bishop John King of London made so bold as to proclaim his objection to ruffs in 1611.

Ruffs never looked better, even though they displeased that Bishop. If he was searching out sin, he should have looked elsewhere rather than pointing a finger at a bit of white fluff!



Lustered black glass. Div I. Small. Collection of Harriet Martin



Mary Stuart. One piece brass. Stamped in high relief.



Mary Queen of Scots. Collection of Harriet Martin

By then King James, having dissolved Parliament that same year, was hardly in the mood to be concerned about the ruff bashing.

Several button portraits illustrated here wear different ruffs in each case. Note the version of a small ruff surrounded by a high flaring style.

Ruffs have continued to appear on clothing throughout history, as fashion predictably rediscovers the encircling appeal of the face framed in the dramatic ruff.

Encircling white ruffs, framing men's features, were also a style of the times. Antique Spanish playing cards depicting Don Carlos I, King of Spain from 1516 to 1556, show his fashionable attire, included a ruff. Could the Bishop have been in a ruff about that ruff, too?



*The King of Cups (Hearts)
This is Don Carlos I, King
of Spain 1516-1556, and
also Emperor of Germany
as Charles V from 1519.*

*Cyrano de Bergerac (left).
One-piece metal with
gold wash. Div III. Small.
Collection of Janet
Scheetz Gerhardt*



*Henri IV of France. A stamped
brass head applied to a
pierced brass background. The
engraved rim is separately
applied. Late 19th century.*



*George Vol Cramer AT:680. The inscription does
not make sense (possibly copied from a medal
used as the design source for the button, or
deliberately garbled, as many inscriptions copied
from coins for coin-like buttons seem to have
been altered). Stamped and tinted brass, steel
back and wire shank. (Above)*

*Henry of Navarre, Henri IV, first Bourbon King of
France. The head is of brass stamped in very
high relief and applied to a brass rim decorated
with faceted steels. (Left)*



Deccan Buttons

Indian artisans have known the art of metalworking since 3000 B.C. More metalwork is known to have originated from the Deccan region, than from any other region in India. The making of metal ware is one craft tradition that engages many families in the state.

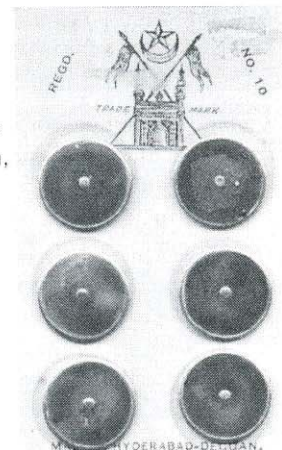
In India craftsmen use different metals like iron, copper, silver and alloys like bronze, bell metal, white metal, etc. to make buttons. A variety of metalwork can be seen from different parts of the country. Deccan buttons featured here are made of silver, often with enameling.

Increasing demand for traditional products, has had an effect on production. Today, these

contemporary buttons are generally made in small-scale and cottage industries. Distinguishing backmarks are found on many, although some have no markings. (See backmarks at the end of this article.)



*These cobalt blue Deccan buttons are found
in small & medium sizes. Raised backmark
reads, "MADE IN DECCAN-TRADE MARK No
230-RD 1926R-B" with a crescent moon and
star. Collection of Linda Kent*



*Deccan buttons on their
original card. Collection of
Margaret Blain, U.K.*



*Black buttons from the collection of
Margaret Blain, U.K.*

