THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

SINCE 1795

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE ORANGE INSTITUTION

One of the most striking aspects of the Orange tradition has been the embodiment of our story through the medium of textiles.

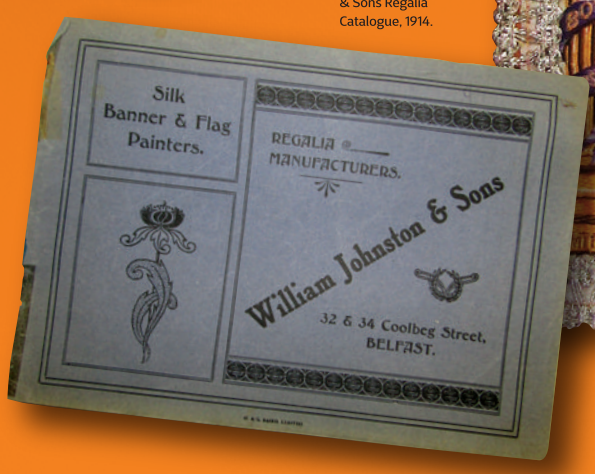
This vibrant material tradition has been in evidence since the Glorious Revolution and has created a platform through which the narrative of the Global Orange Family, and OUR story, has been told. Embodied in banners, sashes, collarettes, tablecloths, and a host of other textiles, this tradition has become as integral and central to the life of Orangeism, as have our parades and public celebrations.

This exhibition is designed to highlight and explain this diverse aspect of the Orange tradition.

William Bridgett and Sons Regalia and Banner catalogue.

Sash from LOL No. 615 showing a decorative satin patch.

Dominion Regalia (Canada) Catalogue, 1962.



William Johnston & Sons Regalia Catalogue, 1914.

Tutill (London) Catalogue, 1913.

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THE BIRTH OF A TRADITION

The events of the Glorious Revolution mark the starting point for formal and informal Orangeism. The new Constitutional settlement, and the personalities that helped make it possible, quickly became a prominent point of reference for the early Orange textile tradition. One of the oldest items held by the Museum of Orange Heritage is associated with King William III and originates just before his arrival in the British Isles, in 1688.

THE WILLIAMITE TABLECLOTH

In 1674 a large damask linen tablecloth was commissioned to commemorate a victory gained by the Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, William, Prince of Orange. Made in Courtrai, Flanders, and bleached in Holland, it took over a year to make on a Chinese loom and embodied the thanks of the citizenry of Grave to the Prince of Orange for liberating their city from an occupying French army during the Franco-Dutch War.

The tablecloth is 8ft 7ins by 7ft 2ins and depicts the leaders of Grave thanking William for delivering the city from occupation and the Coat of Arms of the Prince of Orange and the Order of the Garter - to which William had been installed in 1871.

It is a remarkable example of late Seventeenth Century damask linen and has been well preserved within the Royal Household from the Glorious Revolution until its auction at the end of the Great War. Its sale was to raise funds for widows and orphans of those from the Sandringham Estate who had been killed at Gallipoli. It was acquired by the Panacea Society, before passing to a private collector who placed it on loan with the Museum of Orange Heritage. Smaller versions of this item are on display in the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Rijksmuseum.

One of the images from the 1675 damask linen tablecloth.

LOYAL ORANGE INSTITUTION

After the Battle of the Diamond on 21 September 1795, and the formation of the Loyal Orange Institution, the Sash was adopted as the uniform of an Orangeman. A sash had long been used in civic and military society to denote service and rank, and its adoption by the newly formed Loyal Orange Institution was in line with moves by other fraternal bodies. The colour orange became prominent as the new society was dedicated to the memory of King William III, the Prince of Orange.

During the formative years of the Institution, and other Loyal Orders, the Sash was supplemented with additional pieces of regalia such as Collarettes and Aprons, many of which denoted levels, or degrees, within their respective organisations.

Many banners, flags and pieces of regalia held by the Orange Family bear witness to some of the most defining periods in our history. Key events and individuals almost beckon the observer into scenes from history; from the battles of the Glorious Revolution to the fields of the Somme; from the events of the Diamond and Dolly's Brae to the sinking of the Titanic. Just as history books record the events of the past so also do items of material culture. The famous General Gordon of Khartoum is afforded recognition alongside members of our Institution who have been murdered during the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

Mid Nineteenth Century Masonic flag from Rathfriland Lodge No. 410. It is said to have been carried by Orangemen during the confrontation at Dolly's Brae in 1849.

This flag is on display in Sloan's House in Loughgall.

James Redmond, Worshipful Master of Benraw lodge with a flag said to have been flown at Dolly's Brae in 1849.

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SASHES, COLLARETTES AND EMBLEMS

One of the most iconic symbols of the Orange Institution is that of the Sash or Collarette.

From its inception in September 1795, the Orange Institution adopted the sash as the uniform of its members. These were shoulder to hip items of regalia that remained a prominent feature of Orangeism, especially as part of its public processions and celebrations, until the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when they were gradually replaced by the more compact and regularised collarette.

SASHES

Early Orange sashes were handmade with emblems painstakingly embroidered or painted on them. Consequently, each sash was unique. During the Nineteenth Century generic emblems and symbols began to emerge creating a level of uniformity across the Institution, especially in Ireland. One of the first uniform aspects to emerge was that of a rectangular section of silk depicting King William III on his charger. In some cases, this badge section also contained the name and number of a particular Orange Lodge. This practice was adopted by other fraternities, brotherhoods and societies.

Quickly other symbols began to appear on this regalia. Several emblems of the Orange tradition, especially those of the two levels of the Institution, the Orange Order and the Purple Order, were attached to sashes and subsequently collarettes. They represented three subjects; the story of William, the Glorious Revolution, and Biblical teaching.

Sash from Governor Hoffman Lodge, New York, which was in existence in the 1890s. The owner's name, William Matthews, is printed on the satin patch.

COLLARETTES

Commonly known as a 'Sash', these emerged at the end of the Nineteenth Century as Ulster became greatly impacted by industrial growth. They were more uniform in their appearance and were easy to fold up and carry in a pocket, especially if members were attending meetings after work. This new shape and appearance also meant a reduction in cost, as it allowed for wider production. Although some of the individualism of the Sash was lost in this transition, many of the symbols and emblems remained the same.

Ireland was the centre of regalia production, and family companies such as Victor Stewart Enterprises and Alexanders, among others, continue to produce regalia for the Loyal Orders.

There were, however, manufacturers in other parts of the World. In North America, the Whitehead & Hoag Company produced thousands of sashes and emblems for members of the Institution in the United States and Canada. Founded in 1892 in Newark, New Jersey, the company patented celluloid which, when used in printing, made colours more vibrant and durable. Initially, they employed several hundred people in the production of buttons, badges, flags and banners using celluloid, metal, ribbons, silk and woven fabrics. By 1900 their factory was the largest in the World and they established branches in 30 cities, including London.

A new element to this material culture was embraced by the Institution in North America. It was here that lodges adopted the small shoulder or lapel Flash. These were often worn on the jacket instead of a sash or collarette. Flashes were often reversible, with the front being a bright orange or red and the back being black and silver. The reverse side was displayed at the funeral of a fellow member or on memorial days.

John Hardenbergh, Supreme Grand Master of the USA in 1900. Note the waistcoat style collarette.

This decorative printed patch is Victorian in age as the arch has 'Queen and Constitution' printed on it.

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EMBLEMS AND SYMBOLS

The story of Orangeism has often been reflected through the emblems and symbols that have been used on regalia and other textile items down through the centuries.

Initially, Orange regalia was very simple and only contained images of King William III or the name and number of an Orange Lodge. Quickly a whole host of symbols and emblems began to appear, including the Bible, the Orange Lily and the Crown.

Today the Loyal Orange Institution has six official symbols:

The Bible: The open Bible represents the Reformed Faith and its central importance the Loyal Orange Institution across the World.

The Crown: The Crown is an expression of loyalty to the Sovereign, being Protestant, and is found primarily in the Institution throughout the British Isles and the Commonwealth. This reflects the centrality of the Constitutional settlement of 1689 and the birth of modern democracy.

The Ark of the Testimony: This was a Biblical representation of the presence and authority of God with his people.

Aaron's Rod: This is a reminder of God's power and love for his people.

King William III, Prince of Orange: A reminder of God's deliverance during the Williamite and Jacobite war in Ireland and the enshrinement of Civil and Religious Liberty for all, through the Glorious Revolution.

The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon: This is a symbolic reminder of God's power and the necessity of Orangemen to gird themselves with faith and spiritual strength in all their endeavours.

Early pieces of Orange regalia, including banners, handkerchiefs and tablecloths, contain a multitude of emblems that reflect various Loyal Orders, especially the Royal Arch Purple Chapter and the Royal Black Institution. Some of the most common are;

The Anchor: The writer of Hebrews used the symbol of the Anchor as a symbol of immortality and peace after death. Early Christians used it as a symbol of safe arrival or steadfastness in Christ, during life's journey.

The Five-Pointed Star: Representing the five points of fellowship between members of the Royal Arch Purple Chapter. This star was commonly used by early Christians as representative of the five wounds delivered to Christ during the crucifixion and before he rose again. In Orangeism it is known as the Star of Solomon.

A Coffin: The use of the Coffin symbol is a sombre reminder of the mortality of mankind and the importance of faith in the living God.

Three Branched Candlestick: This is representative of the Trinity; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

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ORANGE BANNERS AND THEIR MESSAGE

One of the most public aspects of Orange material culture can be found in the form of Banners and Bannerettes. Each of these represent an individual lodge, preceptory, club or band. There are three main themes that can be found on Orange Banners. In many cases a banner will have at least two of these themes. They are commonly made from silk with a supporting surround stitched as a reinforcement. Today these large banners are carried by two people but one hundred years ago many such items were carried as flags.

THE STORY OF BANNERS

Biblical Scenes: These can be found on most Loyal Order banners, especially across the British Isles. In such cases, it is often stories or individuals from the Old Testament that have been reproduced. They reflect the Faith based and Christ centred nature of the Loyal Orange Institution. Some popular stories depicted include Moses and the Ten Commandments; David slaying Goliath, and Elijah being fed by Ravens. Popular representations of the New Testament include the Good Shepherd.

Notable Historical Events: History and heritage play an important part in the Orange tradition. This is reflected in the many images of local, national, or international events, that have shaped the nature of history and politics. Naturally the events of the Glorious Revolution and the actions of King William III in securing this new constitutional legacy, loom large. Other scenes are drawn from significant events imbedded in the Orange psyche; the Battle of the Diamond, the clash at Dolly's Brae, the Home Rule Crisis, images of Orange involvement in two World Wars, and individuals who paid the supreme sacrifice in defence of freedom during what has become known as 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland.

Individuals and Personalities: Since the inception of Orange banners, the likeness of key individuals has been commonplace. The most popular is by far King William III, Prince of Orange, after which the Orange Institution takes its name. During the Nineteenth Century significant political figures, clergy, and military heroes, began to appear. They included Benjamin Disraeli, Gordon of Khartoum and Rev. Henry Cooke. At the end of the century the Orange Institution changed its rules which meant that Orange banners could only carry representations of individuals as a memorial feature upon their death. The bitter experience of 'the Troubles' created a new dimension to this act of remembrance, as the Orange Family paid tribute to the memory of those members who paid the supreme sacrifice in defence of freedom and justice.

These silk banners can vary in size, with some being as large as 12ft by 8ft and cost an estimated £3,000.00 to make and paint. Maintained properly, these items can be used as part of processions for up to 25 years.

FAST FACT: Although most banners have been made from silk, there have been occasions when other materials such as canvas or cotton bed sheets have been used. In one case, that of LOL No. 240 in Newtownards, a banner was made from Rayon.

Banner of Fermanagh & Tyrone United LOL No. 1367 showing Colebrooke House and two sons of Sir Basil Brooke who were killed during WWII.

Banner of Star of Bethlehem RBP No. 981 showing the Shepherds coming to visit the infant Jesus. It is unusual for New Testament scenes to be depicted on banners.

Copper printing plate and printer's proof. The banner belonged to Temperance Guiding Star of Ballymacarrett LOL No. 265 and shows King William III leaving Belfast Castle.

Banner of Orangefield Temperance LOL No. 1974 showing the landing of William at Torbay in 1688.

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UNUSUAL ITEMS AND THEIR ORIGIN

This in one of a pair of tablecloths from USA, made in the 1930s.
It is hand embroidered with the names of the members of all the Ladies' lodges.

AN ORANGE QUILT

The process of Quilting is long established in many countries but is especially associated with the United States of America.

Made by the Ladies' Orange Association at the height of 1930s America, this large quilt style tablecloth contains the names of members of the Association from different States across the country. Each square represents an individual Ladies' Lodge, with many also containing the names of men who may have attended these lodge meetings in the absence of an established men's lodge.

HANDKERCHIEFS AND SCARVES

The story of Orangeism can also be told through the changing nature of textiles and their broader societal use. Often a political message or allegiance was carried on the face of printed or woven scarves and handkerchiefs. These were made to commemorate certain events or to promote the activities or memory of individuals.

Our collection contains a variety of such items, charting the changing nature of such textiles and the evolution from the linen handkerchief of the Nineteenth Century to the more popular tea towel of the Twentieth Century. Broad political and historical themes can be identified, from the Glorious Revolution and the actions of King William III, to the Home Rule struggle, especially in the early Twentieth Century. This was the case during periods of heightened political tension such as the constitutional and reform period 1828-1832 and the campaign against the Party Processions Act. These different formats served to keep the subject matter to the forefront of popular culture.

Printed silk scarf.

EMBROIDERED CAP

This unusual item is an early Twentieth Century hand embroidered hat showing the symbols of the Royal Black Institution. It was made by Matron Mary Lynn of Claremont Hospital and Asylum in Perth, Western Australia, and is on display in Sloan's House in Loughgall.

WILLIAM JOHNSTON SCARF

Mid Nineteenth Century Scarf depicting William Johnston of Ballykilbeg. Johnston was to the forefront of the campaign to abolish the Party Processions Act of 1850. He was elected to parliament in 1868 and, in his first term, secured the removal of the Party Processions Act.

DEGREE SASH

This colourful early Nineteenth Century Orange Sash contains a number of coloured fringes which may indicate older degrees that operated within the Orange System prior to the adoption of the simple two-degree model.

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THE FABRIC OF OUR SOCIETY

Over the course of the last 200 years, a number of materials were used to produce the different regalia and banners.

Handmade red velvet sash with a criss-cross ribbon design.

MATERIALS TYPICALLY USED:

Grosgrain: The most commonly used fabric in collarette manufacture is grosgrain. This is a heavily ribbed fabric, historically woven from silk, and later from man-made fibres such as Rayon. The technique uses a thick warp thread and a taffeta weave to produce distinct ribbing. For use in sashes and collarettes it is traditionally woven as a ribbon with selvedged edges, meaning that it does not need to be hemmed.

Silk: This is seen occasionally in older sashes. When used for sashes it was often woven in ribbon form to a prescribed width with selvedged edges, however, it is sometimes seen in handmade sashes with a bound edge and heavier backing fabric. Silk was either used less commonly, or silk sashes have survived less well. Unless they were attached to a backing fabric, it was difficult to attached heavy decoration to it without causing damage. Silk is also the most commonly used fabric in banner-making and can be seen in examples of Worshipful Masters' cloaks.

Satin: Although there are a few examples of satin sashes, it is more commonly used for decorative additions to regalia. Satin ribbons are used to edge sashes and collarettes, and satin patches were printed with symbols and appliquéd on to regalia. Satin was also historically made from silk fibres, woven in such a way to create a glossy side and a dull side. Later it was manufactured from man-made fibres as it reduced the cost.

Velvet: Velvet is a short-tufted fabric and can be woven from different fibres, including silk, cotton, and rayon. It is a heavy, hard wearing material, suitable for clothing and furnishings. It is used in older regalia where the piece is clearly hand-made, often decorated with hand embroidery and satin ribbon. It was also used for officers' collarettes and would be made in quite distinct shapes for a more formal appearance. It was sometimes used in the production of Worshipful Masters' cloaks, making for a heavy and cumbersome, but distinguished looking garment.

Canadian Orange or Worshipful Master's Jacket.

The deterioration of this collarette means that the buckram lining, which is used to strengthen it, can be seen.

Canadian and American 'flashes'. These are commonly worn by members in North America instead of collarettes, particularly at church services.

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DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

Embroidery: Many older sashes have symbols or the owner's name and lodge hand embroidered onto them. Later, machine embroidery is used to produce patch badges, but is also added directly to the sash for decoration. Embroidery is also used sometimes to produce banners or flags, rather than painting the design.

Appliquéd shapes: Regalia manufacturers produced symbols made of fabric and bullion (twisted metal) thread which could be stitched on to sashes.

Ribbon: Ribbon might be attached to a sash in a purely decorative manner, such as the criss-cross pattern seen in the museum on the Ballymacash sash or used to create the shapes of symbols. It could also be used as a border to denote the level of degree taken by the wearer.

Paintwork: On a few rare examples, the symbols were painted directly onto the regalia. Examples of this in the museum are the Dolly's Brae apron and some early Nineteenth Century sashes.

Quilting: There are a few examples in the collection of quilted sashes. These are very similar in appearance and may have been produced by a regalia manufacturer rather than being hand-made.

Ruffles: Ribbon was sometimes used to create decorative ruffles on the edges of sashes.

Fringing: Fringing is a quite common decoration used on sashes and collarettes. Although it can be made of coloured thread or wool, it is most often metal bullion fringing.

Rosettes: Rosettes are made from satin ribbon and usually decorate the shoulders and hip join of a sash

Bullion thread: This is where fine gold or silver coloured metal is twisted is such a way to create thick, flexible threads.

Black satin hand embroidered collarette.

The Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail of 15 July 1848 described a banner recently produced for a Dublin lodge; "Over the platform was a costly and superb orange and blue silk banner of large dimensions, exhibiting on its centre a representation of King William the Third, beautifully embroidered. It was purchased expressly for the occasion, at a great expense, by the Schomberg Lodge 1757, whose title, with the words "No Surrender," and other appropriate mottoes, were inscribed on the border. On either side of this were the letters "V.R." and "W.R." formed of flowers, the whole being surmounted by a crown composed of the same beautiful materials. On the right and left of the platforms hung smaller banners similarly embroidered."

CARE AND CONSERVATION

Many of the items in the museum's collection are in poor condition when they come to us. It is our job to care for these items and to make sure that there is no further deterioration in their condition, and, where possible, to carry out conservation repair work. Some objects have different elements which need specific types of treatment. For example, a banner might need a textile conservator to repair or stabilise the fabric, but also an art restorer to treat the painted areas of the banner in order to repair cracks or mould. Objects need to be assessed before they can be placed on display and may need conservation work carried out on them before they can be included in an exhibition.

A selection of hand embroidered sashes.

Bullion decoration gives a heavy 3-D design on this American collarette from 1884.

Canadian Worshipful Master's collarette from LOL No. 1516.