

Found... ribbon of doomed Charles I: Length of silk worn by the king while sitting for famous portrait to go on display

- Blue silk garter ribbon worn by Charles I found attached to a book
- Ribbon is rare as only reigning Monarch and 25 knights could wear it
- Charles was executed after the defeat of his forces in the English Civil War

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The blue silk garter ribbon worn by Charles I in his famous van Dyck portrait may have been discovered - attached to a book.

Researchers believe four pieces of cloth could be the sash owned by the monarch after one was radiocarbon dated to the mid 17th century - the period when the King ruled.

The discovery was made after Anthony van Dyck's portrait, which features three images of Charles, was selected for a new exhibition and Royal Collection Trust curators decided to examine the silk pieces which were attached to a book about the King.



Iconic: Charles I by Sir Anthony Van Dyck in 1635 in which he is wearing the ribbon

The 17th century tome called the Eikon Basilike - The Royal Portrait - was published 10 days after the monarch's execution on January 30, 1649, and was once owned by the Queen's grandmother Queen Mary. Charles' death came after he was tried for treason and convicted, and it followed the defeat of his forces in the Civil War and his capture.

The 17th century book, probably written in part by Charles, contains accounts of various events and hardships the King encountered in the years before his defeat. It features an inscription that claims the pieces of cloth are from the garter worn by the sovereign but this was treated with caution by curators as the wording appears to date from the 18th century.

The garter ribbon and the portrait will be reunited in the trust's new exhibition In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion, which explores the fashionable attire of European royal courts in the 16th and 17th centuries.

In the van Dyck portrait, the King is wearing a lace collar or 'cloak band', decorated with a soft scallop design popular during the mid-17th century.

A rare surviving lace collar, thought to have been worn by Charles I and dating from around the same year as the painting, completed in 1636, has been lent to the exhibition by the Bowes Museum.

Anna Reynolds, the trust's curator of the exhibition, said: "The exhibition presented us with a unique opportunity to bring the painting back to life through some of the fashionable items the artist recorded the King wearing and to compare the three-dimensional objects with the two-dimensional image. "It's incredible to think that these lengths of silk could in fact be the garter ribbon in one of the most enduring images of the King."