

## Introduction to the Portraits



### Elizabeth I The ‘Coronation’ Portrait

This portrait shows a 26-year-old Elizabeth in her coronation robes; it was unusual for a Tudor portrait as she is shown full face. This image was used as the basis for coins and seals. The portrait was painted around 1600 –1610 and it was based on an original painting (now lost) which dated from Elizabeth’s coronation in 1559.

### Symbolism

Elizabeth is wearing a dress decorated with Tudor roses and fleur-de-lis. The fleur-de-lis is a reference to the English claim to French soil.

Elizabeth has long flowing hair in this portrait, which is traditional for the coronation of a queen.

The fabric of her dress is made from woven gold and silver silk thread. The lining of her robe is ermine, with each black dot being the tail of one animal. These coronation robes were originally used by Elizabeth’s sister Mary I, five years earlier.

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#### Elizabeth I The 'Ditchley Portrait'

This portrait shows a 59 year old Elizabeth, standing on a globe with her feet placed on England. The background is divided into two areas. The left shows sunshine, the right a cloudy, stormy sky.

#### Symbolism

Elizabeth is wearing a white dress, which is a symbol of virginity. The rose pinned to her ruff represents the house of Tudor. The map of England highlights her domination of her country. The background of the painting presents contrasting weather. Storms refer to troubled times in her past. The sunshine refers to her bringing her kingdom into better times.

#### Why was the portrait painted?

Sir Henry Lee commissioned the portrait. It commemorates Elizabeth's forgiveness of Sir Henry Lee, for taking a mistress. The reason that the portrait is called the 'Ditchley' portrait is because Elizabeth is standing on the point in the map where Sir Henry Lee's house is located in Ditchley, Oxfordshire.

It was made for Elizabeth's first visit to Lee's house in September 1592, after he had been out of favour for two years. The weather depicted behind her in the portrait may also refer to their quarrel. For further information on these portraits, why not order a copy of the Portraits of Queen Elizabeth Resource Pack

<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/pubeliz1resource.asp> or

Tudor Portraits Resource Pack

<http://www.npg.org.uk/live/edtudor.asp>