

60 Years Celebrations for Her Majesty's Coronation The Coronation Sacred Oil

As a nine-year old boy chorister of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, I was privileged to sing at the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, little knowing that on my mother's side of the Squire family, the family were responsible for the manufacture and distribution of the holy sacred oil used at the coronations of British monarchs since Queen Victoria's coronation in 1837. The formula for the oil contains the oils of orange flowers, roses, cinnamon, jasmine and sesame, with benzoin, musk, civet and ambergris. At the coronation, the oil is contained in the solid gold ampulla, a vessel in the shape of an eagle. The sacred oil is poured from the beak of the eagle. The ampulla was made for the coronation of Henry IV in 1399. The anointing spoon, circa 1200, is silver with four pearls in its handle. The bowl of the spoon has a ridge down the centre, which forms two compartments into which the Archbishop dips his fingers when anointing the sovereign.

Secret Formula

The following extract is from *The Pharmaceutical Journal* 30th May 1953. "The oil to be used at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II is not unlike that used for Charles I, and has been prepared from the secret formula used by Peter Squire, which he made for the coronations of King Edward VII in 1902 and King George V in 1911. For the coronation of George VI in 1937 a new supply of oil



was prepared by Messrs. Squire and Sons from the old formula. The remaining oil was kept in the Dean's study at Westminster Abbey which was destroyed by bombing in World War II. The original formula of

Peter Squire had been preserved in a Chanel No.5 perfume bottle by Great Aunt Mabel (Mrs. Mavrogordatos), daughter of the late Sir Peter Wyatt Squire."

A Family Concern

It was Sir Peter Wyatt's father, Peter Squire 1798-1884, who was responsible for the coronation oil formula used in the 19th century and 20th century at Westminster Abbey. In 1831 Peter Squire, bought a building in Oxford Street, London, No.413, on the corner of Duke Street. In 1837 he was appointed Chemist and Druggist in Ordinary to Queen Victoria's Medical Establishment. Later he bought a medieval manor house and farm at Basmead, near St. Neots, to grow his medicinal herbs. The land is still farmed by the Squire family today. Peter Squire was a founder member of the Council of The Royal College of Chemists and The Royal Botanic Gardens in Regents Park. He died at the family home at 12, Yorke Gate, aged 86, in 1884. He married Mary Jane Balmanno and by her had five children. It was their third son, Peter Wyatt Squire, who carried on the business and was knighted in 1918 for services to the Royal family.

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