

Air Force crests and their royal crowns

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HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE VI, during his reign from 1936 to his death on 6 February 1952, decreed that crests, badges and emblems with royal approval should bear the “Tudor Crown” with its single surmounting arch (Figure 1).

Shortly after Queen Elizabeth II acceded to the throne, an Order in Council announced that the Royal Crown to be used during Her Majesty’s reign should be the “Edward Crown” (St Edward the Confessor), with its surmounting paired half-arches (Figure 2) (Group Captain J Davies, Royal Air Force Ceremonial Office, Headquarters Personnel and Training Command, London, personal communication). This meant that badges, emblems, crests and so forth which previously carried the Tudor Crown would need to be appropriately altered.

However, the Queen’s Command does allow for certain exceptions to this rule, all of which are at the discretion of Garter, Principal King of Arms.

Many Royal Air Force squadrons and units that were active during World War Two in the reign of George VI, but were disbanded before his death, naturally bore the Tudor Crown on their unit crests. However, it is of interest that some subsequent reproductions of these now historical crests, produced during the reign of Her Majesty, are adorned with the Edward Crown (Figure 3).

For historical accuracy it may sometimes be desirable to reproduce crests with the Tudor Crown surmounting. A recent RAF publication reproduced the crest of a World War Two RAF squadron which was disbanded in 1945 (and in which some Australian airmen served and were killed in action) with the Tudor Crown on its crest (Figure 4).



1: Royal Australian Air Force Crest of June 1943, the official amendment to the approved original of January 1939, and bearing the Tudor Crown of King George VI.



2: Current Royal Australian Air Force Crest, bearing the Edward Crown of Queen Elizabeth II.



3: Photograph of 138 (“Special Duties” [SD]) Squadron Crest set in the tiled floor of St Clement Danes RAF Memorial Church, London. The crest bears the Edward Crown of Queen Elizabeth II.



4: Original 138 (SD) Squadron Crest, bearing the Tudor Crown of King George VI (courtesy RAF Ceremonial Office, Stanmore, Middlesex).

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Reference

A Delayed Salute: To the Memory of a World War II Air Crew No. 138 “Special Duties” Squadron, RAF Tempsford: Killed in Action over the North Sea, Europe. A tribute by their relatives (compiled by John Williamson). Henley Beach, South Australia, 5022. Seaview Press. 2002. pp183. ISBN 1 74008 184 6.

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