

Did You Know? An Anglican Glossary



Image from Alcuin Club Tracts
XIII A Directory of Ceremonial

Cope

The cope (Latin: as *pluviale* 'rain coat' or *cappa* 'cape') is a long cloak, open in front and fastened at the breast with a band or clasp. It has no special liturgical use, having evolved from a practical garment. Bishops, priests and even lay canons wear it. A cope adds dignity and color to any ceremony. There were post-Reformation rubrics regarding the wearing of the cope, at one time restricting it to cathedrals and collegiate churches

In the Middle Ages a cope, richly embroidered with gold couch work or even jewels, was the standard gift when royalty visited monasteries. Thus the great number of copes found by the looters when the monasteries were dissolved. The monks, criticized for "hoarding" copes, did not ask for them and probably would have preferred something else.

Old copes are treasured for their beauty and quality of work.