# Colonel Blood’s daring 1671 Crown Jewels heist revealed in new Mail podcast series



On the latest episode of the Mail's "Queens, Kings and Dastardly Things" podcast, royal biographer Robert Hardman and historian Kate Williams delve into the audacious exploits of Colonel Thomas Blood, who famously attempted to steal the Crown Jewels in 1671. This episode marks the beginning of a three-part series exploring the stories of notorious criminals who targeted the priceless treasures of the British monarchy.

The Crown Jewels, a collection of ceremonial regalia integral to the coronation of new monarchs, are described as one of the British monarchy's most prized possessions. Currently housed at the Tower of London for public viewing, they include iconic items such as St. Edward's Crown, composed of five pounds of solid gold, and The Sovereign's Sceptre, which is adorned with the Great Star of Africa—reportedly the largest clear-cut diamond in existence. Estimates of the jewels' worth range between £3 billion to £5 billion, but their true value is challenging to ascertain due to their historical and cultural significance.

Much of the current Crown Jewels collection emerged after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Following the English Civil War, Thomas Cromwell famously sought to eliminate the earlier regalia, viewing them as an ostentatious display of wealth that clashed with his rigid religious convictions. Upon the monarchy's restoration, Charles II unveiled a new set of jewels for his coronation in 1661, reigniting the monarchy's ceremonial traditions and status.

Colonel Blood, born in Ireland in 1618, was a soldier who initially supported the monarchist cause, later switching allegiances to the roundheads under Cromwell. His contentious past earned him substantial land holdings, yet the restoration of Charles II saw him stripped of his estate. This life-altering setback spurred Blood towards rebellion; he became embroiled in a failed plot to seize power in Ireland, resulting in a wanted man status. Robert Hardman describes him as a "Scarlett Pimpernel figure," suggesting a man shrouded in daring mystery.

In May 1671, Blood resurfaced in London, adopting the guise of a vicar with a companion posing as his wife. His cunning plan led him to befriend Talbot Edwards, the 77-year-old guardian of the Crown Jewels. Engaging Edwards in discussions about a potential marriage between his fictitious nephew and the guardian's unmarried daughter, Blood leveraged this friendship to access the treasures. The audacious heist unfolded when Blood's gang attacked Edwards, incapacitating him with a mallet while they quickly looted the jewels.

Historian Kate Williams recounts the comical and bold nature of the heist, describing one gang member stuffing a golden orb down his trousers, while Blood desperately attempted to break St. Edward's Crown. Though he narrowly escaped with the loot, Blood's swift getaway was foiled when he was apprehended by Edwards' son.

In a surprising twist of fate, Blood, once imprisoned for his crime, sought an audience with Charles II, where he managed to persuade the king to grant him a pardon. Historians speculate that Blood's perception as a folk hero, who was seen as a champion of the Irish people, may have played a significant role in influencing the king's decision. Hardman notes that this act of clemency transformed Blood into a celebrated rogue figure until his death in 1680.

Williams adds that even in death, Blood's legend persisted; many were compelled to exhume his body to confirm his passing due to the myriad of tales surrounding his life and escapades. While Blood was known for his astounding resilience and cunning, history ultimately tells that he, like all mortals, could not escape death—an irony that solidifies his enduring legend.

For those intrigued by historical tales of audacity and intrigue, the podcast invites listeners to explore more stories in the upcoming episodes released every Thursday.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14757237/Crown-Jewels-Heist-New-Mail-podcast-royals-greatest-crimes-time.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-39405324)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14757237/Crown-Jewels-Heist-New-Mail-podcast-royals-greatest-crimes-time.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5699556/the-crown-jewels-are-worth-5-billion-are-their-precise-value-mysterious/), [[5]](https://www.royal.uk/crown-jewels)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/The-Crown-Jewels/), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/coronation-crown-jewels-colonel-blood-their-history-royalty-b1858997.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-39405324)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14757237/Crown-Jewels-Heist-New-Mail-podcast-royals-greatest-crimes-time.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/coronation-crown-jewels-colonel-blood-their-history-royalty-b1858997.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/royals/article-14757237/Crown-Jewels-Heist-New-Mail-podcast-royals-greatest-crimes-time.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5699556/the-crown-jewels-are-worth-5-billion-are-their-precise-value-mysterious/> - The Crown Jewels, a revered collection of ceremonial regalia, are officially estimated to be worth around £3-5 billion. However, precise valuation remains elusive due to their immense historical and cultural significance. Displayed at the Tower of London, these treasures are primarily used during royal coronations, symbolising the continuity of the British monarchy. The valuation reflects their craftsmanship, rarity, and emotional resonance among the public.
3. <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/The-Crown-Jewels/> - The Crown Jewels are a significant element of British heritage, representing the monarchy's power and continuity. Many items were commissioned after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, notably under Charles II. The collection includes famous pieces such as St. Edward's Crown and The Sovereign's Sceptre, used in coronation ceremonies, and reflects the rich tapestry of England's history.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-39405324> - Colonel Thomas Blood, known for his audacious attempt to steal the Crown Jewels in 1671, was born in 1618 in Ireland. Initially a soldier fighting for monarchists, he reclaimed lands under Cromwell's regime before becoming notorious for his rebellious actions against the monarchy. Blood's infamous heist involved disguising himself and deceiving the guardian of the jewels, showcasing both cunning and boldness in his criminal exploits.
5. <https://www.royal.uk/crown-jewels> - A symbol of the British monarchy, the Crown Jewels consist of an array of ceremonial items central to royal coronations. Their historical roots trace back to the 14th century, with many items originating post-1660 following the monarchy's restoration. The collection includes iconic pieces, reflecting both artistry and tradition, which are conserved and displayed at the Tower of London.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/coronation-crown-jewels-colonel-blood-their-history-royalty-b1858997.html> - The Crown Jewels serve as a testament to Britain's monarchy and its ceremonial practices. Colonel Blood's infamous attempt to abscond with these treasures in the 17th century exemplifies both daring and controversy. After successfully stealing the jewels, Blood’s eventual pardon by King Charles II was influenced by his perception as a folk hero, cementing his place in the annals of British history.
7. <https://www.toweroflondon.org.uk/explore/the-crown-jewels> - The Crown Jewels are housed at the Tower of London, serving as a focal point for visitors wishing to understand England's royal history. These ceremonial treasures, used in coronations, include the Crown, sceptres, and orbs, visible to the public. Their enduring legacy and the myths surrounding figures like Colonel Blood in the 17th century illustrate the intertwining of history, royalty, and folklore.