

Peers to represent faiths at coronation

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Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish peers will present the King with four key pieces of coronation regalia during the ceremony at Westminster Abbey, in the first involvement of non-Christian figures in the crowning of a British monarch, *The Times* can reveal.

Clerics from other faiths are not due to be asked to speak by giving readings or blessings during the coronation ceremony but will form part of a “faith procession”, it is believed.

Non-Christian religions will be represented in the main ceremony by four members of the House of Lords from four major faiths.

The King has stated his desire to be a defender of all faiths while also serving

as head of the Church of England. One of the coronation robes is to be carried to the King by Baroness Merron, 64, a Jewish peer and former Labour MP.

Three other items will be carried by the peers to the King as he sits in his coronation chair, each brought on a cushion to be touched by the monarch before being passed on, probably to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who will give them to the King to be worn as the appropriate words are spoken.

The *Times* understands that Lord Patel, 84, a Hindu crossbench peer who was born in what is now Tanzania, will carry the sovereign's ring, and Lord Kamall, 56, a London-born Muslim peer who sits as a Conservative, will carry the armills, a pair of bracelets.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon, 90, a Sikh crossbench peer born in Rawalpindi in what was then British India, will carry

the coronation glove. A 90-minute rehearsal for the peers was held in the ballroom of Buckingham Palace on Wednesday, arranged to replicate the layout of the Abbey with someone standing in for the king.

Asked for comment by *The Times*, Singh said the plans were a “show of commonality between the religions” and would help to break down “the walls between religions”, adding: “It stresses the point that [the King] has said again and again that he is defender of the Christian faith but with total respect for all other faiths.” Asked about any other participation from non-Christian faith leaders, Singh said: “I don't think there'll be any readings or blessings, there will be the . . . faith procession.”

Non-Christian clerics are likely to be invited to form part of a procession.

This is likely to include the chief rabbi, who has been invited to stay at a royal residence the night before so he can travel on foot to Westminster Abbey on the Jewish sabbath.

Rabbi Jonathan Romain of Maidenhead Synagogue said the four peers bringing regalia to the King was “a very Christian reworking of the gifts of the three Magi [to] Jesus in the manger” but said: “It is clearly a deliberate avoidance of any non-Anglican religious personnel being involved. The peers are representing four faiths, but they are not faith leaders. He said more “meaningful participation” would see “the leaders of non-Christian faiths approach the King during the ceremony and privately give a blessing on behalf of their communities”.

This week the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby,

denied reports that there had been “tension” between church leaders and the King over the multi-faith elements of the coronation.

The *Mail on Sunday* claimed that they were at “loggerheads”, citing church sources who said the King's desire for a diverse ceremony risked clashing with centuries-old canon law. However, a senior church official said Lambeth and Buckingham palaces were in “complete agreement about every aspect of the coronation”.

A Lambeth Palace spokesman declined to comment on the new details and said: “The Coronation liturgy will be published in due course and we look forward to sharing more details then.”

Lords Patel and Kamall and Baroness Merron were not available for comment. Buckingham Palace declined to comment.

Gan Gan and young royals in family snap

It is, possibly, one of the ultimate granny shots of the late Queen (Valentine Low writes). This picture, showing Queen Elizabeth with two of her grandchildren and eight of her great-grandchildren, was taken by the Princess of Wales at Balmoral just a few weeks before she died.

The picture has been released today to mark what would have been the Queen's 97th birthday.

It shows “Gan Gan”, as her great-grandchildren knew her, sitting on a sofa between Mia Tindall, nine — with her little brother Lucas, who turned two last month, on her lap — and Savannah Phillips, 12.

Prince George, nine, who since the Queen's death is second in line to throne, is standing behind her with his sister Princess Charlotte, seven, and his brother Prince Louis, who turns five on Sunday. With them are Lena Tindall, four, and Isla Phillips, 11. Standing behind them



are the children of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh: Lady Louise Mountbatten-Windsor, 19, and James, Earl of Wessex, 15. All the Queen's

grandchildren have fond memories of family summers spent with the Queen at Balmoral.

As Peter Phillips, the Queen's eldest grandson, once said: “We had a lot

of fun and there was a lot of space for kids to run around in, and it wasn't just us, it was the Waleses [William and Harry], Freddie and Ella

Windsor and the Gloucesters. So there was quite a gang of us growing up in that age and it was a lot of fun. We caused quite a bit of mayhem and chaos.”

The family photograph was taken by the Princess of Wales at Balmoral last summer.

Back row: Lady Louise Mountbatten-Windsor; James, Earl of Wessex;

middle row, from left: Lena Tindall, Prince George, Princess Charlotte, Isla Phillips, Prince Louis; front row, Mia and Lucas Tindall, Queen Elizabeth, Savannah Phillips

Younger sister will step up to support Queen during service

Valentine Low

The Queen's younger sister, Annabel Elliot, will have a formal role during the coronation as a lady in attendance.

Camilla, 75, will be supported by Elliot, 74, and another Lady in Attendance, the Marchioness of Lansdowne, who was named as a Queen's companion last November.

The Queen will be anointed and crowned alongside the King during the coronation service and will also have four pages of honour who will perform roles alongside the ladies in attendance. Lady Lansdowne, 68, is a deputy lieu-

tenant of Wiltshire who is godmother to Camilla's daughter, Laura Lopes.

In *The Sunday Times* last week she spoke of the “incredibly tough” times that Camilla had when she was continually followed by photographers in the 1990s. “It was horrible at times, but her sense of humour and knowing she had her girlfriends around her got her through.”

It is understood that the women's roles will be to support the Queen through elements of the service, at Westminster Abbey on May 6.

The Queen's pages of honour are her three grandsons, Gus and Louis, twins

aged 13, by her daughter, and Frederick, 13, by her son, Tom Parker Bowles, and her great-nephew, Arthur Elliot, 10, Elliot's grandson.

Elliot, an interior designer, is close to her sister and on rare occasions has taken part in royal events with her.

Elliot's husband, Simon Elliot, a businessman, died in March after a long illness. One of their three children is Ben Elliot, a former co-chairman of the Conservative Party.

During an ITV documentary screened last year the two sisters gave an insight into their family life when they were children. A film crew accom-

panied them to Hall Place, the former Hampshire home of their grandparents.

It emerged in the show that Camilla buried her younger sister's beloved teddy bear, known as “Tiddy Bar”, in the grounds and confessed only decades later.

Camilla said: “Yes, Tiddy Bar, he had a very happy resting ground,” and her sister joked: “I've not forgiven her, it still rankles to this day.”

Meanwhile the Queen has been given a new coat of arms to reflect the change of reign. Her previous coat of arms was granted by Queen Elizabeth

in 2005 — shortly after she got married to the King, who was then the Prince of Wales — to mark her 58th birthday.

The new coat of arms, which was announced in the College of Arms newsletter, shows the crown in the centre rather than the heir apparent's coronet. It also depicts the lion on the King's side wearing a crown. In another change it also includes the Order of the Garter, although this reflects the Queen's appointment to the order rather than the change of reign.

The boar on the right hand side reflects her family on the side of her father, Major Bruce Shand.