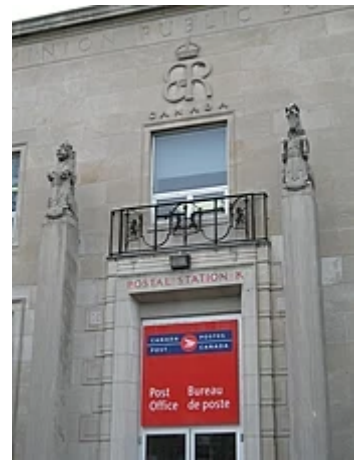


Royal cypher

In modern heraldry, a **royal cypher** is a monogram or monogram-like device of a country's reigning sovereign, typically consisting of the initials of the monarch's name and title, sometimes interwoven and often surmounted by a crown.^[1] Such a cypher as used by an emperor or empress is called an **imperial cypher**. In the system used by various Commonwealth realms, the title is abbreviated as 'R' for '*rex*' or '*regina*' (Latin for "king" and "queen"). Previously, 'I' stood for '*imperator*' or '*imperatrix*' (Latin for "emperor" and "empress") of the Indian Empire.^{[2][3]}

Royal cyphers appear on some government buildings, impressed upon royal and state documents, and are used by governmental departments.



The former Postal Station K in Toronto (pictured in 2006) displays above its main entrance *EVIIIR*, the Royal cypher of King Edward VIII



A post box in Windsor in Berkshire bearing the royal cypher of King Edward VII, an intertwined *EVIIR*

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Commonwealth realms

The use of a royal cypher in the Commonwealth realms originates in the United Kingdom, where the public use of the royal initials dates at least from the early Tudor period, and was simply the initial of the sovereign with, after Henry VIII's reign, the addition of the letter 'R' for '*Rex*' or '*Regina*'. The letter 'I' for '*Imperatrix*' was added to Queen Victoria's monogram after she became Empress of India in 1877.

The initials – which had no set pattern or form of lettering laid down – were usually shown in company with the royal arms or crown as on the king's manors and palaces – such as those of Henry VIII on the gatehouse of St James's Palace. The purpose seems to have been simply to identify an individual sovereign, particularly on certain landmarks that he or she has commissioned, as the royal coat of arms in contrast was often used by successive monarchs and is therefore not distinct. The initials are furthermore used on government papers, duty stamps and similar objects, and were sometimes surmounted by a stylised version of the Tudor Crown or, since 1953, St Edward's Crown. In Scotland, the Crown of Scotland appears in place of the Imperial Crown.^[4]

Though royal symbols (including, most notably, the coat of arms, royal standards and great seals) differ among the 15 Commonwealth realms, as they are separate monarchies, the one sovereign uses the same cypher throughout all of his or her countries. Distinction continues to be made between the personal cypher and the simpler, more workaday public initials, the former being the sovereign's own monogram and the latter simply a means of identifying a reign. Nowadays, the initials are also called the royal cypher, but, to aid clarification, the monogram is referred to as the royal cypher interlaced and reversed.



A Royal Mail vehicle logo used in Scotland. A convention adopted after the 1953 Coronation results in the EIIIR royal cipher not being used in Scotland.

Elizabeth II

The late queen's cypher was EIIIR, standing for Elizabeth II Regina.^[5] The monarch's cypher is today usually surmounted by a stylised version of St. Edward's Crown. In Scotland as a result of a dispute, known as the Pillar Box Wars, over the correct title of the new monarch (Elizabeth I of England and Ireland was not a monarch of Scotland, so the new queen would have been Elizabeth I, not II in Scotland according to that view), after 1953 new post boxes carried only the Crown of Scotland image rather than the EIIIR cypher, which continued to be used in the rest of the United Kingdom and in other realms and territories.

The production of the cypher was an early step in the preparations for her coronation in 1953 as it had to be embroidered on to the uniforms of the Royal Household and on other articles.^[6] Cyphers for other members of the royal family are designed by the College of Arms or Court of the Lord Lyon and are subsequently approved by the monarch.^[7]



Queen Elizabeth II's Royal Cypher, surmounted by St Edward's crown

Charles III

On 26 September 2022, Buckingham Palace unveiled the cypher of the new king, Charles III, that will gradually replace the cypher of Elizabeth II in everyday use. The design was selected by Charles from a series of designs prepared by the College of Arms and features the King's initial "C" intertwined with the letter "R" for Rex with "III" denoting Charles III, with a Tudor Crown above the letters. ^{[8][9]} Charles's Scottish cypher uses the Crown of Scotland instead.^{[10][11]}



King Charles III's Cypher	Surmounted with a Tudor Crown	King Charles III's Royal Cypher	Surmounted by the Crown of Scotland
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Canada

The royal cyphers have been incorporated by the Canadian Heraldic Authority into the various royal standards of Canada. The use in Canada of the reigning monarch's cypher, which is sometimes uniquely surrounded by a garland of maple leaves, is as a symbol not only of the sovereign him or herself, but of Canada's full sovereignty.^[12] It is also found on post offices and some government buildings in Australia.

Elsewhere

Other royal houses have also made use of royal or imperial cyphers. Ottoman sultans had a calligraphic signature, their tughra.

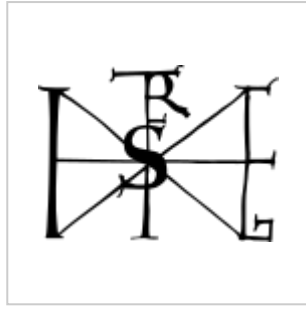
All the monarchs of Europe's six other surviving kingdoms use cyphers, with royal crowns above them. King Harald V of Norway uses the letter H crossed with the Arabic numeral 5; King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden uses the letters C and G overlapping with the Roman numeral XVI below them; King Felipe VI of Spain uses the letter F with the Roman numeral; and Queen Margrethe II of Denmark uses the letter M with the Arabic numeral 2 and the letter R (for Regina) below it. King Philippe of the Belgians uses the letters P and F intertwined, referring to the fact that his name is Philippe in French and Philipp in German, but Filip in Dutch, the three main languages in Belgium. King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and his Queen Maxima share a joint cypher consisting of the letter W entwined with the letter M.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn of Thailand uses a cypher made up of his initials in Thai script ("จ.อ.ส." V.P.R. – *Vajiralongkorn Parama Rajadhiraj*, an equivalent of *Vajirarongkorn Rex*).

Gallery



The double-headed eagle, the most recognized emblem of the Byzantine Empire, with the sympilema (dynastic cypher) of the Palaeologi in the centre



Royal monogram of King Stephen I of Hungary



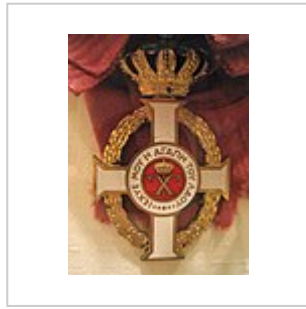
Arms of the Kingdom of Prussia including the cypher of King Friedrich I of Prussia at the centre



The Personal flag with the cypher of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand



Cypher of King Maha Vajiralongkorn of Thailand



Cypher of King George I of the Hellenes on the Order of George I



The cypher of King George II of Great Britain and Ireland, employing an Arabic numeral '2'



The Royal and Imperial Cypher of Queen Victoria forms a part of the emblem of the Royal Victorian Order surrounded by a Brunswick star



A Hong Kong mailbox with a cypher of King George V



The royal cypher of King Edward VIII; like all cyphers before Queen Elizabeth II, it uses the Tudor Crown above the lettering



The most common variant of King George VI's cypher



The royal cypher of Queen Elizabeth II, surmounted by St Edward's Crown



Variant Queen Elizabeth II cypher in Jersey, with Arabic instead of Roman numerals typically employed



The royal monogram of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh



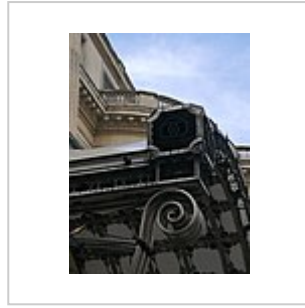
Base of a Spanish style lamp post with the cypher of King Ferdinand VII



Royal (monogram) cypher of Catherine II



The monogram of Charles III of Brabant



The royal cypher of King Carol II of Romania (two opposed Cs) decorates the porch roofs at the entrances in the Royal Palace of Bucharest.



Royal cypher of King Michael I of Romania



Royal cypher of King Michael I of Romania



Royal cypher of Margareta of Romania



Royal cypher of King Felipe VI of Spain



Royal cypher of Queen Margrethe II of Denmark



Royal cypher of King Charles XIII of Sweden

See also

- H7 (monogram)
- Heraldic badge
- MacCormick v Lord Advocate
- Mon (emblem)
- Personal Flag of Queen Elizabeth II
- Pillar Box War
- Royal sign-manual
- Signum manus

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