

sergeant subscribed for one robe of scarlet, one of violet, one of brown-blue, and another of mustard and murray, with tabards of cloths of the same colours. Much of the ancient costume of the Order of the Coif is still worn at the present day by the Judges of the High Court of Justice, who, excused from the obligation of belonging to the ancient Order adopt its vestments in memory of the past. There is one particular part of the dress belonging to the Order of the Coif—the black cap—which the Judges always put over their wigs when passing sentence of death. This cornered cap, black cap, or sentence cap, as it is sometimes termed, is a piece of limp black cloth, which is put on the top of the wig; it is not the coif, as Lord Campbell repeatedly states, but but was the covering expressly assigned to veil the coif on the only occasion when the coif was required to be hidden. By the ancient privileges of the sergeants the coif was not to be taken off even in the royal presence. The chief insignia of the order, it was to be so displayed when sitting on the Bench, or pleading at the Bar; but this rule seems always to have been departed from in passing sentence of death. The head of the administrator of justice was then covered as a token of sorrow by the black sentence cap. When the Judges sit in the Criminal Courts, and when attending Church in state, they always carry the sentence cap in their hand as part of their regular judicial attire. The black cap is also worn by the Judges over their wigs on the day when the new Lord Mayor goes to the law Courts in state to be sworn in before Her Majesty's Judges.

The ceremony of putting on the coif for the first time was, at one time, a very solemn affair. The white coif having been placed on the head of the sergeant-elect, the Lord Chancellor, or Lord Chief Justice, to whom the royal power was entrusted, addressed the newly-made sergeants in an elaborate speech, setting forth the antiquity, the honour, the rights and the duties of the sergeants-at-law. Among the ceremonies on the creation of sergeants, one of the oldest was that of the presentation of gold rings (about twenty-eight) to several persons of different grades—the Sovereign, the Lord Chancellor, the Judges and the Masters of the Common Pleas. The Sovereign's ring was a very massive one; the Chancellor's and the Judges' rings were about one-third of an inch in breadth, but not very thick. The newly-made sergeant, on his creation, severed his connection with his Inn of Court. If the creation took place during Term, a breakfast was given in Hall, and afterwards he was escorted to the door, which was closed against him, and the bell solemnly tolled in token of his being dead to the society in the future.

In bygone days, on the creation of new sergeants, great feasts were given. The ordinary business of the Courts at Westminster was suspended, the Judges and other members of the Order of the Coif, the benchers and apprentices of the law, with the highest officers of state, and even the Sovereign and members of the royal family, nobles and bishops, and the Lord Mayor and city officials assembled in large numbers to witness the ceremony of call. These feasts were usually held at Ely House, in