

Oh sew special! Queen's Jubilee banner

By **Rebecca English**
Royal Correspondent

IT has taken a team of talented seamstresses four months to sew half a million golden buttons with 31 miles of thread.

So it's not surprising, perhaps, that more than 3,000 cups of tea were consumed as the team worked on this regal red velvet banner.

It will be used to decorate the royal barge, the Spirit of Chartwell, on which the Queen will travel for next month's Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant.

Measuring 10ft by 10ft, it depicts a crown flanked by a lion and unicorn with the royal motto 'Dieu et mon droit' - God and my right - a design which has been approved by the college of Arms which oversees British heraldry. The names and dates of coronations past will also be sewn around the edge.

The banner has been created by artist and sculptor Ann Carrington and her five assistants at her studio in Margate, Kent. It was a month in the planning before work began in the New



On the button: The splendid velvet banner with its glittering coat of arms

Year - and during January's cold snap Ann bought herself and her assistants ski salopettes, balaclavas and fingerless gloves so they could keep up with their schedule.

There are 500,000 buttons on the banner. Thousands of tiny gold-coloured ones were imported from China because Ann found it impossible to get small enough in the UK. But she also managed to incorporate a large number of vintage buttons - some of them solid gold or gold plated - from old military uniforms.

The red velvet on to which the buttons have been sewn was

donated by British firm Colefax and Fowler.

Miss Carrington, who has completed private commissions for everyone from the Duke of Westminster to Sir Elton John, said: 'Having used images of the Queen as part of my work for many years I'm delighted to have the opportunity to make a piece to help celebrate her Diamond Jubilee.'

The pageant will take place on Sunday June 3 and will see 3,000 boats - led by the Queen - take to the water in a spectacular flotilla to mark her 60 years on the throne.

BY NUMBERS

5 seamstresses and one designer

4 months of sewing half a million buttons of gold, gold plate and imitation gold

250 sticking plasters used for pricked fingers

3,000 cups of tea drunk by the team as they sewed on the buttons

31 miles, or 164,050ft of gold thread sewn into the banner

250 needles used by the team