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NOTES ON KENTISH ROYAL ARMS

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ABOUT thirty years ago some notes were compiled and published in *Arch. Cant.*, xlv, 209-15, on certain royal arms in Kent which had recently received preservative treatment. I called attention to the slowness with which the subject had had any interest shown in it, up till then; and in the long interval since, it is only comparatively recently that it has begun to come into its own. Within about the last decade, a great deal has happened, and a number of English counties, particularly in the Midlands, has had lists compiled for the respective areas, additionally to much rescue and preservative work carried out on particular examples. If opportunity offers, I hope in due course to attempt a similar catalogue for Kent. But meanwhile it seems high time to record in these pages much that has occurred since the framing of the former list.

I propose first to refer back to that list, supplying any necessary *addenda et corrigenda*; then to set down particulars of later and recent preservative work; with a brief record of cases where something still remains to be done.

1. HOO ST. WERBURGH

It is gratifying to correct the former statement that the two coats of Elizabeth I and James I were apparently lost. When last seen, both were existing, but instead of proper display in open church, I found them on the walls of the tower basement, with the further handicap that this is normally locked against visitors' entry, so that the arms can be seen only dimly and obliquely through glass which fills the arch.

2. ULCOMBE

The modern France and England quarterly coat, in glass of east window of north aisle, probably c. 1500, is fortunately still in place. The other coats cited as lost (*Arch. Cant.*, xlv, 209) need no further correction.

3. OTFORD

This notable discovery (William III, 1697) has since been moved from north to south wall, and forms an outstanding member of the 1689-1702 group which is fairly abundant in Kent, though rare in Surrey and Sussex.

4. BRABOURNE

Former particulars are still correct, but both this and the example at Mersham, doubtless by the same painter, can now be more narrowly dated than as merely George II. Entries in Archdeacon Head's visitation of 1750, still preserved at Lambeth, establish that the two coats were executed shortly after that year.

5. SNAVE

There was some repainting, subsequently to my former paper, the effect at first rather startlingly bright but now much toned down. It is now possible to classify this Hanoverian coat as of George II, 1735. Present position, east wall of nave.

6. APPLIEDORE

The arms (George III, 1794) are still in the position stated. But it would appear that their restoration in Dr. Cock's time was less successful than then supposed, for later on the canvas developed bad rucks which harboured much dust. Recent treatment to make it taut again has apparently involved considerable repainting, but the effect is admirable and makes this coat a fine ornament in a well-kept church.

7. OLD ROMNEY

Position still as stated, but unfortunately there has been further fading in thirty years, and new treatment might help to alleviate the present dim effect.

8. NEW ROMNEY

The church coat, of less merit than the Anne in the town hall, or the George II at New Hall, Dymchurch, would profit by rehanging in another place, for the present one is marred by halation from adjacent southern windows.

9. LYDD

The George II, 1732, fortunately survived the bombing of this fine building in 1940, but disappeared from public view for many years afterwards. It is good to record that the arms have since been cleaned and hang, instead of on the south side as formerly, now on the north.

10. BRENZETT

George III, 1780, still over south door; very similar to Dymchurch, 1778, and in same type of 'eared' frame.

11. ST. MARY-IN-THE-MARSH

George III, 1775; since repainted, and still over south door. Delete 'possibly' to 'very probably', in reference to Ivychurch, also 1775, being by the same hand.

12. 19 UPPER STRAND STREET, SANDWICH

The glass covering has been removed from this fine plaster coat of James I, with improvement of visibility and taking away disturbing reflections on the glass.

We now come to the small group of arms which were about to be attended to when I wrote last:

13. SUNDRIDGE

Charles II, in a Gothic-looking frame which is doubtless a later addition; moved from tower to south aisle.

14. ASHFORD PARISH CHURCH

The parochial authorities were very slow to heed recommendation to take down these noble arms of Charles II, 1660, from the former impossible position, doubtless thought a correct one by the Victorian 'restorers'. But at last it happened and the carving was hung where I suggested, on west wall of south transept, and about where it lived in the time of Queen Anne, being referred to in the Warren MS. of 1712. Now a splendid ornament of the interior (illustrated in *Kent Churches*, Boorman and Torr (1954), p. 152).

15. HINXHILL

My appeal for rehangng was granted, and this first coat of George III is now lower down, on north wall of tower. But even if any cleaning was done at the time, the canvas is still disappointingly dull. Two further members of the Marten group can now be given: (a) Upper Hardres, George II, and the artist's earliest example; (b) Staplehurst, a fine painted coat, dated 1793, and apparently his latest. This was found in a local oasthouse, a few years ago, and is now fortunately restored to the church.

16. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S, SANDWICH

This painted lozenge, for Charles II and dated 1660, on north wall of nave, is unfortunately still not attended to, so many years after the effort was made; condition pretty dim.

17. ST. MARY'S, SANDWICH

After this valuable building had been saved from the outrageous attempt to destroy it, the 1660 Charles II coat was again cleaned, and hangs over the north door. Formerly skied on west wall of nave, the Rev. M. M. Vischer listened to my plea for removal to a better place.

18. ST. PETER'S, SANDWICH

The contemporary arms here are undated but known by documentary evidence to have been made in 1660. The whole achievement was repainted at the time of the present Queen's Majesty's coronation, and now hangs near the north door.

The following comments concern the few examples mentioned on p. 215 of vol. xlv:

19. ST. GEORGE'S, CANTERBURY

It is feared that this small Victoria perished at the bombing of the church in 1942.

20. ST. GREGORY'S, CANTERBURY

More than offsetting the loss at St. George's, a handsome second coat of Anne, 1713, was, in 1958, discovered in the disused church of St. Mary, Northgate. The Rev. D. Ingram Hill has wisely removed it to St. Gregory's, on south wall of nave.

21, 22

I have no further news to report about the stone achievement (see xlv, 215) except that its condition is now probably worse still. So far as I know, the Charles II at Hythe is still up in the parvise.

23. LENHAM

It is sad to record that at any rate till very recently (but I know not) the condition of this first coat of Anne, 1705, is even worse than 30 years ago—a framed bundle of ragged edges, and no advertisement for a church just off one of the chief roads in Kent. It is on the north wall of tower, a sad evidence of long neglect, perhaps matching up with the disappearance of two fine brass chandeliers, though I understand that these are stored, disintegrated, somewhere on the premises. *Meliora speremus*.

24. WOODCHURCH

In pleasing contrast, the excellent George III (1773), which formerly lived high over the tower arch, was by my advice taken down, cleaned and rehung much more visibly over the north door. This beautiful coat is certainly by the same hand as 25. BILSINGTON (1774) which has been moved from west to east of nave. Each is depicted on pp. 155-6 of *Kent Churches*, Woodchurch photographed while it was still high up.

This ends the first part of my revised report, having touched on the various coats mentioned in volume xlv. Now for further developments:

26. CHARING

Victorian restoration here saw fit to banish the royal arms up into the tower, whereby for many years all memory of them was lost. Just in time to be illustrated in *Kent Churches*, p. 151, they were retrieved and set up on north wall of nave, thereby erecting a landmark in this sphere. It is known that several coats of Charles I formerly existed in Kentish churches, as at St. Andrew's, Canterbury, Cranbrook, Faversham and Strood; but it was naturally assumed that all such had perished when it became illegal to display royal arms in churches, to be superseded by the bearings introduced under the Commonwealth. When the Charing arms were brought down, it was found that they displayed a Hanoverian shield, the initials G R and the date 1716. All three features were, however, at complete variance with the characteristics of the rest of the design. The painting had therefore to be put to the test of many known kindred examples, as at Lymington, Hamp-

shire. The three features were demonstrably mere alterations to meet the changed conditions after 1714. The trained eye could, firstly, be in no doubt that the original achievement was made in the previous century; and secondly, in its earlier half. As no vestige remained of any I (for Iacobus) which could anchor it to James I, it was therefore inevitable that the monarch intended was Charles I. Further proof was provided by ghostlike superseded numerals which almost certainly give 1635; and beyond doubt, the C had, as so often, been turned into G (for George I) by the addition of a vertical stroke. So the upshot of this exciting discovery was to make Charing the owner of what I believe is now the only coat of Charles I in any church in Kent—for the example in the Queen's House at Greenwich does not, of course, qualify for ecclesiastical classification.

27. ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL

Over the door at the head of the steps leading up to the south-east transept from the south aisle of the quire is a fine carved wood Stuart coat whose style is that of Charles II, but which had, by neglect, got into a dim and dirty state. This has recently been repainted to its great advantage. It seems very probable that it was set up at some time during the decade 1660-70, for there is valuable corroborative evidence to be had in the statement of the traveller, Thomas Baskerville, in the course of an undated journey from London to Dover. This may be read on p. 277 of *Hist. MSS. Com.*, 13th report, appendix, pt. ii, London, 1893. Visiting the cathedral, he says that 'in the back side of the organ [on the pulpitum—V.J.T.] they are setting up the Kings arms very exquisitely carved in wood'. A similar journey taken through Essex is dated 1662, so it seems likely that the Kentish progress was nearly contemporary; while as to the original position of the arms, Baskerville's account proves that it was a counterpart of the Charles II coat still at Canterbury, over the eastern side of the quire door, next to the dean's stall.

28. STALISFIELD

In this remote church, in the woods behind Charing hill, is a carved Stuart coat which is doubtless also the arms of Charles II. Formerly in a dark place at the east end of north aisle, it has now been cleaned and rehung in much better light on south wall of nave.

29. WEST CLIFFE

Another later Stuart coat, painted on wood, was formerly in a bad position under the nave roof, immediately over the chancel arch. Fairly recently, it was cleaned and set up again on north wall of nave.

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30. RANGER'S LODGE, HYDE PARK, LONDON

Here I saw in private possession, between the two wars, a carved Stuart coat, probably Charles II, which I suspect to have come from Nackington, outside Canterbury, or at any rate from some other neighbouring church.

31. COUNTY HALL, MAIDSTONE

A small carved later Stuart coat has been moved from the first to the ground floor, but I have no knowledge whence it came.

32. AYLESFORD

A small carved coat of William III, formerly over the south door, has recently been moved to better visibility on the north side of the church.

33. ACRISE

An excellently-wrought carved coat of William III, on front of west gallery, was repaired and repainted, from previously neglected condition, about 1938. Surprisingly, so soon after, another renovation took place in 1963.

34. ST. MARY'S, DOVER

Similar fine carved arms of William III are opposite the mayor's pew and up in the north gallery; repainted since the end of the last war; they have strong affinity with the contemporary example in the nave of St. Clement's in Sandwich.

35. CHILHAM

The painted second coat of Anne, dated 1712, and set under a scrolled pediment, was originally incorporated with the altarpiece, as may still be seen in a few Wren churches in London. Thence it was relegated to the tower wall, but after a long while there, and at my request, it was brought into better view by being placed over the south door. I believe that this and the William III in the chapel of Morden College, Blackheath, are now the only Kentish survivors of royal arms originally set over the Holy Table.

36. MAYNARD'S HOSPITAL, CANTERBURY

The charming and diminutive, though little-visited chapel here has a painted coat of Anne, c. 1708, in fair condition and at the lower end. Mr. Hill kindly told me of this example.

37. HOUGHAM

A faded but interesting second coat of Anne is painted on an elliptical board, now set at east end of south aisle, but badly needs cleaning.

38. HAWKINGE (OLD CHURCH)

Likewise the later version of Anne's bearings, dated 1713, painted and framed and set against boarding which at its base bears a bold text from Proverbs viii, 15. This good coat was formerly in a dim place in the small vestry, but now graces the long nave, on its north wall (illustrated in *Kent Churches*, p. 155).

39. CRUNDALE

Lining up in importance with the Charing discovery is the recovery to proper view of a very fine painted Anne, dated 1710, and at the time of writing not yet rehung. It was the gift of Mrs. Catherine Carter, of Winchcombe in Crundale. I had long been interested in this case, and realized that so remote a church contained something superlative, but its former—but not original position—was rather dreadful, skied under the western end of the nave roof, and proper inspection defied by the glare of light from the window below. Cordial thanks are due to Canon S. G. Brade-Birks, the incumbent, who at last gave me my heart's desire, had the arms down and cleaned them with his own hands: he described the result, justly, as 'magnificent'. The fine workmanship of these arms should be compared with Rolvenden, in the Weald, and Northiam, over in Sussex, these two by the same hand, of excellent quality and both dated 1713.

40. KEMSING

Comparable with the exciting discovery at Otford, many years ago, must be recorded the rescue work at Kemsing, an adjacent parish. Before the writer came on the scene, the state of each was deplorable in the extreme. Otford was a filthy picture, inches deep in deposits and living in pitch darkness under the tower. The Kemsing arms were, until the church restoration, set high on east wall of chancel, but were later banished to a very dark and dirty place behind the organ. My appeal was at length heard, and now the recovered arms (of George I, 1721) are hung in the Victorian added north aisle. The supporters in particular suggest that it may be an older coat, altered and re-dated after the death of Queen Anne. Some corroboration is found at Edenbridge, where the altered arms still bear Anne's SEMPER EADEM motto, though the date of conversion is curiously also 1721. Similar

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circumstances attend the arms at Ash-next-Ridley, another Anne re-used for George I.

41. SITTINGBOURNE PARISH CHURCH

The carved arms of George III were doubtless made when the church was refitted after the fire of 1762. Formerly in the tower basement, they have been brought into church, at west end of nave.

42. EYNSFORD

These carved arms date from 1760 to 1801 and are a creditable example at a period when merit was in many cases declining. The text FEAR GOD, etc., is below the achievement which is set against horizontal boarding embellished with a very large G R monogram and enclosed by scrollwork of pronounced rococo character. Former site was impossibly high on west wall of nave. When last seen, the arms had been repainted and were loose on the church floor—I hope, later, to occupy the suggested place on the nave wall.

43. KENARDINGTON

In the wonderfully rich district of Romney Marsh and its neighbourhood, this fragmentary church has a handsome painted achievement dating between 1816 and 1837—good work for its late date—and with supporters still erect. The whole may be compared with the excellent George IV, 1825, at Newenden (illustrated in *Kent Churches*, p. 158), on the border of Sussex. The Kenardington coat is on the west wall of vestry, above the interesting enclosing screens of 1717. It was formerly in dingy state, but has been well cleaned, perhaps about the same time as Appledore was done.

44. HUNTON

The late Lord Ormonde told me, in 1952, that in his house in this parish he had the royal arms (of 1714-1801) which had been ejected from the parish church, on the Hyde Park model. Whether the coat has now been restored to its original home I do not know, but it is clearly desirable that it should be.

The foregoing impressive list of recent rescue work happily performed would be incomplete without reference to a case now in progress:

45. ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

For many years this church lay closed alike for services and inspection, but after its laudable restoration, nothing had been done about a pitch-black picture, over south door, which I knew to be the first coat of Anne, 1704. At the time of writing, the painting has been removed from its frame, as a bad hospital-case, but I hear with pleasure that it will soon be back, and I have recommended a preferable place for re-hanging. Several recent visits, however, found it not yet back.

The Kentish sequence comes right up to the present day. Apart from a fair number of Victorian coats scattered about the county (as at Selling and Boughton-under-Blean), we have an Edward VII, on the front of Kemsing roodloft, and a small George V, near the south door of Otford—a tiny object when compared with the noble William III close by. Elizabeth II is represented at Sutton-at-Hone (1953) and Brasted (1956), with another case just over the Surrey border, at Chelsham.

Analogous to the Marten family, now grown to six, may be noted the work of John Adams, at Headcorn (1808) and Teston (1811), while Sheldwich is probably also by him. A Tenterden painter called Bishop signed the arms at Stone-in-Oxney (1814); and a couple in the name of Comport remain at Burmarsh and Newenden. It is unfortunate that we do not know the names of the painters of such fine examples as Borden (1719) and St. Lawrence-in-Thamet (1729).

Lenham has been mentioned as being about as great an eyesore as was old Burham church before its calling back to life. Lest this be thought unique, it is fair to record a few more lamentable cases. When last seen, the Hanoverian arms at West Farleigh seemed a close challenger to Lenham, for sheer decay. A little after the former paper was written, I found a canvas and altered Charles II, ejected from the ancient church in the Isle of Grain, and rolled up among lumber in an outhouse of the vicarage—long before the refineries appeared. This was matched, far more recently, by an incredible happening in the town of Deal. St. George's church there has a remarkably fine painted George I, dated 1715, but stowed up in the west gallery. Across the way is the town hall, which always in my memory had housed a part of its birth-right, the fine painted coat of William III which the town set up over the mayor's seat to mark its freedom from Sandwich by the incorporation of 1699. A visit, but very few years ago, discovered the arms had gone, and not even the custodian knew anything of the loss. Insisting on a thorough search of the whole premises, I at last found the precious arms, buried behind piles of junk of all kinds, and turned to face a very damp wall in an outside yard, so that neither sun nor air could penetrate to this lair. A good deal of plain English was necessary before the city fathers could be persuaded to undo this ill performance and let William

rise again over the seat of dignity; and so sorry a story demonstrates the constant need for vigilance if heraldry and other works of art are to be kept in any decency.

I conclude with a short list, not pretending to be exhaustive, of church arms (the adjective is used because there is a respectable group of examples also in Kentish town halls or private houses) which need attention and which should be brought into line with those just dealt with. The trouble is generally failure to notice the state of the objects rather than, nowadays, any particular spite against them. The faults needing correction in this final list are either dirty condition, or bad situation, or both.

Ash-next-Sandwich, Badlesmere, Birling, Bobbing, Bredgar, Cowden, St. Leonard's, Deal (as to the Anne example), Lower Halstow, Hastingleigh, Hernhill, Marden, Meopham, Milton-by-Sittingbourne, Preston-near-Wingham, Throwley, Tilmanstone, Tudeley with its daughter Capel, Walmer (old church), Waltham, Warehorne, Wickham-breaux, St. Mildred's in Canterbury. Also in the city, at Holy Cross, Mr. Hill has kindly promised to investigate the apparent disappearance from the church of a small coat of Anne, rather like that on the south side of All Saints, Maidstone. Add faded state at Harrietsham.

An almost unique example, at Whitstable but now lost, was noted by Bryan Faussett in 1756. The coat of William III, dated 1692, had the arms of Archbishops Abbot and Laud on its reverse, so it was doubtless an early Stuart coat, altered for William.

If, 30 years ago, I could write of 'the fine heritage of our Kentish royal arms', the treasure now appears all the greater because, despite a few casualties from war or other causes, so much has been done, in our own county as elsewhere, to ensure its further preservation.

POSTSCRIPT

Six further cases have come to my notice, just in time for inclusion here.

MINSTER-IN-SHEPPEY

This is a palimpsest coat with Anne on one face and George I, 1716, on the other. Here one must report retrogression rather than progress. The board was formerly suspended across the north aisle so that each face could properly be seen. Now it has been moved to N. wall of N. aisle, with Anne's bearings clamped to the wall. This should be rectified by reversion to the former hanging-free arrangement.

LYDD TOWN HALL

When I inspected these arms of Charles II, in 1942, their condition was very poor. Re-examination in 1963 showed further deterioration

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and nothing done in two decades to arrest it. The canvas resembled a relief map designed to show mountain-ranges, and the painting was even harder to decipher. An appeal to the civic authorities produced a promise of belated rescue, but I do not know if this is yet *de facto*.

BENENDEN

During 1963, a royal arms was found (I believe in the belfry). It has been completely repainted and set up over the south door, with fine effect in a rather bleak interior. It proves to be the second coat of George III, dated 1806 and signed by the same Bishop who produced Stone-in-Oxney, 1814.

HUNTON

The arms have now been restored to the parish church and have been hung low down on S. wall of S. aisle. Of rather small size, it is a carved coat with 1714-1801 heraldry (not Stuart, as Lord Ormonde thought), and by the style probably for George I.

TONG

A cast-iron coat of Victoria, formerly under the tower, has now been tinctured and removed to S. wall of nave.

MINSTER-IN-SHEPPEY

I have taken up the matter with the Vicar, and I hope it may be possible eventually to have the other side exposed.