

*This is the eighth of an occasional series of articles by David Stone about incidents in the history of Swanton Morley and its church*

## THE ROYAL COAT OF ARMS

I thought that you might like a change of topic after a fairly heavy bit of history last time, so I am going to talk about the Royal Coat of Arms that hangs above the south door.



Overall view of the board



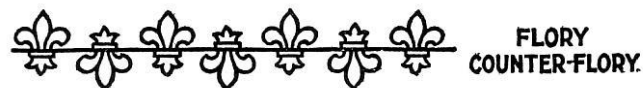
Close-up of the shield

Heraldically speaking, the board shows an *achievement* which consists of the following elements.

### In the centre is a shield bearing the royal arms

The arms are in four quarters which are conventionally numbered from 1 to 4 as follows. Top-left, top-right, bottom-left, bottom-right. These arms are certainly those of Queen Anne, after the act of Union between England and Scotland in 1707.

In the first and fourth quarters are the three lions of England *passant guardant* united with the *lion rampant* of Scotland. It is hard to see in the photocopy, but if you look in the church you will see that the Scottish lion is set within a *tressure* or border consisting of two lines with little fleurs-de-lis on the inside and the outside; this is rather delightfully described as a *double tressure flory counterflory* and is an ancient feature of the Scottish arms. A single tressure flory counter-flory is illustrated below.



In the second quarter are the three large fleurs-de-lis of France. The emblem of fleurs-de-lis first appeared in the arms of Edward III, who claimed the throne of France through his mother Isabella, the 'She Wolf' (who lived at Castle Acre). This claim was not finally dropped until the reign of George III.

In the third quarter is the harp of Ireland. Although Henry VIII made Ireland into a kingdom, the harp was not incorporated into the royal arms until the reign of James I.

### **Around the shield is a belt bearing the motto of the Order of the Garter**

Notice that instead of the usual 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' (shame on him who thinks ill of it) the 'y' has been moved to read 'HONI SOIT QVI Y MAL PENSE'.

### **The supporters**

The lion and the unicorn were used throughout this period and do not really help us date this board..

### **The mantling**

This is the helmet, feathers etc at the top of the board, which we shall see later may give some clue as to when the board was first painted.

### **The royal motto**

This can be found in a compartment or panel at the bottom of the board. First, note that it is written as 'DIEVIT MON DROIT'. However, it is not the misspelling that is important; it is the fact that it appears on a board that claims to be from Queen Anne's reign. The motto 'Dieu et mon Droit' (God and my right) was adopted as the royal motto of England by Henry V, but subsequent monarchs also used other mottos. In particular it seldom, if ever, appeared on the arms of Queen Anne. These usually bore the motto 'Semper Eadem' (always the same) which had been the personal motto of Elizabeth I.

## **What is the date of our board?**

### **Probable alteration of the board**

It was quite common to try to save the expense of painting a new board by overpainting an earlier board. Stanley J. Wearing, an expert on royal arms in Norfolk churches, wrote of our board, 'It should be noted that the Royal Motto is in a panel, the ends of which scroll upwards, on which the supporters stand. The type of mantling and Royal Motto suggest a Charles' board altered in Anne's reign'.

### **Other boards**

Should you be interested in comparing our board with other boards from this period, there is a splendid board at Shipdam, which Wearing concludes was a Charles I board minimally altered to bear the initials C.R.II and the date 1661. For an example of an original board with the arms of Charles II, go to North Walsham. Both this board and an achievement painted on canvas at Dickleburgh (also Charles II) show mantlings that are very similar to those at Swanton Morley. This confirms Wearing's comment above.

For another example of a Charles' board overpainted in Anne's reign, go to Cley-next-the-Sea. However, here the quarterings are those of the beginning of her reign, before the union with Scotland. Unfortunately, they are rather faint. Examination of the Royal Motto reveals clearly that the original "DIEU ET MON DROIT" was originally in a white panel and that it was irregularly overpainted with 'SEMPER EADEM'. It is perhaps surprising that at Swanton Morley they took the trouble to update the complicated arms on the shield, but did not alter the motto.