



Royal Arms in St Torney's Church, North Hill, Cornwall

Above the south door of St Torney's is this set of Royal Arms. The notation of "C R" at the top indicates that this dates to before the English Civil War and to the time of Charles I. As is explained below, many of the Royal Arms in churches did not survive the Civil War and the ensuing Commonwealth and this object may be significant and rare.

The crest has the royal helmet and crown; the supporters are the Lion of England and the Unicorn of Scotland; the arms are those of Charles I as seen on the sixpenny coin below. The first and third main quarters have the Prince of Wales' Feathers sub-quartered with the Lions of England; the other main quarters show the Saltire of Scotland and the Harp of Ireland. The use of the Prince of Wales' Feathers is interesting and is explained below.



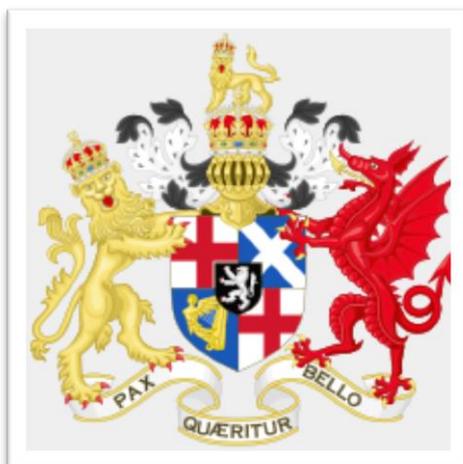
Reading the following extract makes one wonder what is on the back.

From "Heraldry For the Local Historian and Genealogist" by Stephen Friar, Grange Books 1992 (ISBN 1-84013-002-4)

"The Royal Arms will often be found painted, and sometimes gilded, on boards, affixed to the interior walls of churches. They were erected as tokens of loyalty to the Crown and obedience to the sovereign as head of the Church ...

"Following the succession of the Catholic Mary I [in 1553], most royal arms were removed from churches ... But the practice was again reversed by her successor, Elizabeth I [reigned from 1558-1603] ... The practice continued through the early Stuart period and in 1614 the Archbishop of Canterbury instructed a painter-stainer to 'survey and paynte in all churches and chappells within the realm of England, the Kinges Majesties arms in due form with helmet, crest, mantell, and supporters as they ought to be, together with the nobel young princes.' This directive, and its reference to the future Charles I, may have encouraged the appearance of boards bearing the 'Prince of Wales' Feathers' ... (It should be noted that the so-called 'Prince of Wales' Feathers' device is the badge of the heir apparent to the English throne, not all of whom have been invested as princes of Wales.) In 1631 the Archbishop again issued instructions that the royal arms should be painter or repaired ...

"During the Commonwealth (1649-60) many examples of the royal arms were destroyed or defaced while others were taken down and hidden or turned around and the Commonwealth arms [shown below] painted on the reverse ...



"Following the restoration of Charles II in 1660, a statute requiring that the royal arms should be displayed in all churches resulted in many old boards being brought out of hiding and repainted or new ones made. Wherever the Commonwealth arms were displayed they were to '... be forthwith taken down and that the King's Majesty's Arms be set up instead thereof'.

"Most surviving examples date from the Hanoverian period."