

## TWO SEVENTEENTH CENTURY EMBROIDERED ROYAL COATS OF ARMS

by AUDREY HENSHALL, M.A., F.S.A., F.S.A.SCOT., and  
STUART MAXWELL, M.A., F.S.A.SCOT.

THE Museum possesses two seventeenth-century embroideries, both of the Royal Arms, which may conveniently be considered together.

The earlier in time has recently been generously presented by Mr E. F. A. Hay, with the approval of the other members of his family; we are also indebted to the Marquess of Tweeddale who suggested the Museum as a home for it. Edinburgh Town Council presented the other.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE HAY HANGING

The Hay hanging consists of elaborate pieces of needlework, cut out and sewn on to a taffeta and canvas background (Pl. LI); it measures 5 ft. 3½ in. by 4 ft.

The background is a fine silk taffeta, originally a pale duck-egg shade, now in a very fragile state and dull gold in colour except where it has been protected. The silk was woven 22 in. wide, and three strips have been used. In places it has been treated with glue which has turned dark brown. Below the taffeta is a layer of coarse canvas to which the needlework has been sewn through the silk. The canvas is now nailed round the edge to a modern wooden frame, and this mounting has evidently reduced the size of the hanging as the leaves slightly overlap the edge.

The foundation of the embroidery is a thick dark green baize, seen only as a very narrow cut border round each piece of appliqué. The baize is covered by canvas, and between the two is padding in varying depths according to the pattern, the thickest being the shield about 1 in. deep. Where the padding is slight a pale substance like broken-down cardboard is used, where heavier, horse-hair.

The canvas is covered by satin cloths of various colours as required by the design. The edges, inside the cut edge of the baize, are covered by three applied yarns: the outer, yellow or white couched with pale thread, the next, black couched with red, the third, red or white cord. These are also continued as an outline where parts of the design are not cut out. Cords are also used to outline details in the design, and occasionally also as a filling for small areas. Small pieces of satin are applied to the main satin colour for some of the detail. The rest of the detail is by embroidery in two-ply silk thread. The following stitches are used:

(a) 'Lattice' stitch over considerable areas as a shading effect, sometimes in more than one row. It consists of a series of parallel oblique threads fairly widely spaced crossed by another set of threads to form a cross-hatched effect, really an elongated cross-stitch or herring-bone; (b) Satin stitch, used for small areas, generally worked over a coarse sewn padding, probably of linen thread; (c) Long and short stitch, generally for small and fine details and carefully shaded, worked through the satin and canvas; (d) Brick stitch, worked over widely spaced parallel linen threads

couched onto the canvas. The silk yarn completely covers them and passes through the underlying satin. Each stitch passes over two linen threads; the stitches are worked in horizontal rows, the top of the stitches of each row lying between those of the previous row and passing over one of the linen threads already used<sup>1</sup>; (e) French knots.

The embroidery was worked in six or seven pieces: the central design; the two roses; the two thistles; the shaft and banner of St Andrew; and probably the crown.

The satin cloths are much faded. The following colours were used: (a) white; (b) yellow, these two now being indistinguishable, buff colour, but both are necessary heraldically; (c) yellow-green, a green warp with a yellow-green weft; (d) dark green, presumably originally dark blue (used for the garter); (e) mid-green, presumably originally mid-blue (used for ground of the third quarter of the shield); (f) red; (g) mid-brown, dark brown warp with yellow-brown weft, perhaps originally another shade of red.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE NEEDLEWORK

1. *The Shield.* The background of first and fourth quarters is yellow (b), of the second quarter blue (e) and red (f), of the third quarter blue (e).

The first and fourth quarters. The body of the lion is red satin outlined with red cord. The scale is small, the only embroidery is a tiny green (? blue) long and short stitch tongue and eyes in green and yellow with a French knot in the centre. The red tressure is a double-twisted cord between two cords, its fleur-de-lis satin stitch over sewn linen padding outlined by red cord.

The second quarter. Yellow fleur-de-lis worked as above. The six yellow lions are most carefully worked, for they are very small; the bodies are satin stitch over sewn linen padding, the heads brick stitch, the eyes and tongue black, the centre of the eyes a tiny green spot, the claws a single green stitch, the tail a cord with a tassel of diverging long stitches, the whole figure outlined in fine black double-running or back stitch. The quarters are divided by yellow or white cords, arranged as in the tressure of (a).

The third quarter. The yellow harp frame (? originally partly white) is partly satin stitch over linen padding, partly applied satin with embroidery shading, partly outlined by red cord. The strings are each a single cord. The harp pegs are represented by five black long and short stitch roundels.

The quarters of the shield are divided by a heavy red cord between two white cords.

The 'mantling' border of the shield is yellow (it can be seen to be the same piece of cloth as the background of the fourth quarter), almost entirely shaded, outlined in red cord. A heavier red cord outlines the shield itself.

2. *The Thistle collar.* The ground is yellow (? or white) satin, the knots dark green (blue) outlined in red cord, the thistles yellow-green (c) outlined in yellow or white cord except the tuft of the thistle flower, outlined in red. Embroidery indicates the sepals and the top of the flower.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, M., *Dictionary of Embroidery Stitches* (1951), 15-16.

3. *The Garter*. The ground is dark blue (now green), the buckle and tab-end yellow satin. The garter is edged by a heavy border of seven cords, the five inner are yellow (or white), the outer red. A red cord outlines and forms an elaborate pattern on the strap-end and outlines the buckle, which is partly shaded. The buckle holes in the garter are represented by a diamond and roundels of yellow brick stitch. The lettering is yellow (? white) satin stitch over a sewn linen padding, outlined in red cord.

4. *The Unicorn*. The animal's body is dull yellow, presumably white satin (a). Another piece of cloth, now the same shade as the body, has been applied for the collar and was presumably yellow. The same colour would be expected for the hoofs, tail, horn and crown, but cannot be distinguished. The space between the animal's head and the crown is brown. The body has lost almost all the satin cloth, and most of the pale green (? originally blue) lattice-stitch shading. A white cord outline has been used to emphasise details of the body; red cord is used to divide the tail into flowing segments and the mane into small sections. The beard and forelock are outlined in greenish cord heavily oversewn in red so that both colours show. The horn, outlined by red cord, is shaded, and its screw is indicated by oblique pinkish cords set at intervals. The features were worked in fine long and short stitch embroidery, of which only some black and yellow of the eyes and red at the mouth survives. The collar and crown are similarly worked, outlined by red cord, and the details of the crown picked out in red cord. The jewels are in fine satin stitch, red with green centres, with tiny yellow (? white) French knots between the jewels on the crown. Long and short stitch embroidery fills the crown cap, now yellow, but probably white to contrast with the yellow of the metal. The knobs round the top of the crown are embroidered straight onto the green baize, seemingly in yellow-green long and short stitch. The chain is entirely covered with yellow split stitch, edged by red cord; where best preserved black threads seem to form a series of dots down the centre.

5. *The Lion*. The lion was entirely covered in yellow satin except for the cap of the crown which is brown, with yellow cord for details and yellow lattice stitch shading. The claws are red satin stitch over sewn linen padding. The features, now mainly decayed away, were fine long and short stitch (the eyes with red centres surrounded by green and white, outlined in black) except the moustache-like whiskers in red brick stitch. The crown is similar to that of the unicorn. On the cap are two long and short stitch roundels in green and ? white worked like the jewels on the large crown (see below).

6. *The Banners*. (a) *St Andrew*. The ground is dark blue (now green), with a white satin cross, and border of rectangles, five per side except against the pole, of red and white or yellow, the pole yellow, outlined by red cord. The sections are edged by a laid black thread couched with red, with white or red cord against its inner side.

(b) *St George*. The ground is white, with a red cross, the border of rectangles, three per side, of red, dark blue and white or yellow, with cord outlines as above.

7. *The Crown*. The ground is brown, but this only shows as the inside at the bottom and the cap, for it is overlaid with yellow for the metal work; both have embroidered shading. The cross on top is yellow with three projecting blue knobs (d).

The main parts are outlined in a heavy red cord, and the jewels on the cap (but not elsewhere) are outlined in green cord. Immediately above the headband is a strip with very fine cords set obliquely, widely spaced as in the unicorn's horn. Much of the detail is in long and short stitch and carefully shaded. The jewels in the headband mainly consist of groups of roundels in red, white or green (? blue) in satin and split stitch. In the centres are a few contrasting satin stitches set transversely to the other stitches, and round the edge of one half of each roundel is a widely spaced oversewing of pale colour as a high-light. The jewels on the crosses above the headband are similarly treated. The two large 'jewels' on the cap have the centres carefully shaded, half red and half white (or yellow), in such a way that the middle appears to be raised.

Most of the embroidery of the cross on top of the crown has gone, but in the centre a split stitch diamond, worked as four triangles, survives. The centre of the arms were worked in black which has perished, and the edges of the arms were shaded. There was some work in red and white on the blue knobs projecting from the arms of the cross. The tiny centres of the scroll edging the crown are filled with black embroidery.

8. *The Mount*. It is yellow-green (*c*), much of it covered with long vertical stitches of rather heavy yarn, probably to represent grass. There are also delicate little four-petal flowers, buds, and leaves, in fine long and short stitch shaded in pink, yellow and white.

9. *The Motto*: 'Beati Sunt (now illegible) Pacifici'. The ground is white or yellow, with some lattice stitch shading in yellow-green (? blue) at the edges. It is outlined by three red cords. The letters were black satin stitch over sewn linen padding, now almost entirely rubbed away.

10. *The Thistles*. The leaves and the lower part of the flower are yellow-green (*c*), the upper part of the flower white or yellow. The stems are entirely formed of cords, pale green edged by white. The leaves are outlined and veined with cord. The sepals on the flower globe are shown by small scattered triangles of white satin stitch over linen padding. The upper part of the flower was shaded all over with reddish-pink long and short stitch, presumably lilac or purple originally. The upper edge is marked by a concave line of vertical satin stitch.

11. *The Roses*. The petals are red satin, but the tip of each is white (or yellow) satin stitch over linen padding, each section outlined with red cord, and an additional white cord outlines the whole. The centre is formed by a number of yellow or white crossed cords with a French knot in the centre of each square. The sepals consist of two rows of rather open pale green satin stitch, herringbone-wise, over lower rows in the opposite direction, worked directly on the green baize. The leaves and stems are worked like the thistles.

#### HISTORY OF THE HAY HANGING

As handed down in Mr Hay's family it is as follows<sup>1</sup>: it was carried at the battle

<sup>1</sup> Hay, C. C. and Hay, J. Y., *A Collection of Notes on the Family of the Hays of Hopes Haddingtonshire* (privately printed), p. 3 and Appendix I.

of Worcester, where Charles II was defeated by Cromwell on 3rd September 1651, by Edmond Hay, first laird of Hopes, who 'saved it by his bravery, and had been permitted to bring it home to Hopes'. Edmond Hay was a natural son of John, first Earl of Tweeddale.<sup>1</sup>

The Hanging is certainly older than the battle of Worcester, for the motto, 'Beati Sunt Pacifici', marks it as of King James VI's time. It was a favourite motto of his and to be considered a Peacemaker was always his wish.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons, dated 8th September 1651, Cromwell wrote 'I have sent this bearer, Captain Orpyn, with the colours taken in the late fight, at least as many of them as came to my hands, for I think very many of them have miscarried. I believe the number of these sent will be about an hundred; the remain also being forty or fifty, which were taken at the engagement in Fife.'<sup>3</sup> The captain received a reward of one hundred pounds over and above the honour of presenting them at the bar of the House.

Edmond Hay may well have been responsible for one of the colours which 'miscarried', but that this hanging is the one concerned is most unlikely. Seventeenth-century banners were normally painted or had their emblems formed by applied strips of fabric, not by heavy, padded embroideries.<sup>4</sup>

It is feasible that this hanging could have been carried in procession between two poles, but it is more likely that it was a panel or hanging for the back of a canopied throne, and that it was made for an important State occasion. The Lord Lyon has examined it and suggests that it may have been made for use in the Presence Chamber of the Palace of Holyroodhouse on the occasion of James VI's visit in 1617. On style alone, particularly the shape of the shield and the design of the large crown, he would date it to 1610-15.

This leaves unanswered the question how it came to be in the possession of the Hay of Hopes family. It may be that it was bestowed on Edmond Hay, in recognition of his bravery at Worcester, when he was granted sasine of Easthopes in 1653, or on his marriage at about the same date. There are, however, other possibilities.

The preparations for the Royal visit of 1617 were on a scale never seen before or since,<sup>5</sup> and offer clues as to the origin and fate of the hanging. The robe royal and four royal beds, for instance, were thought to be in such a state that they should be sent to England for repair. There is evidence in the Privy Council Register that 'his Majesties tapestrie, moveables or household stuff' fell at times into the hands of noble

<sup>1</sup> He was not the son of John, Lord Yester, as stated by *Hay and Hay*; the extract from the Register of Sasines quoted in their Appendix II makes the position clear.

<sup>2</sup> There are two engraved English medals having on the obverse portraits of James and on the reverse the English version of the Royal Arms, with 'Beati Pacifici' on a label below—see *Medallic Illustrations*, Vol. 1, p. 214, Nos. 61 and 62. A recent biography *King James VI and I* by D. Harris Willson gives references to the King's preoccupation with the title Peacemaker—pp. 271-2 and note 1, p. 457.

<sup>3</sup> Cary, H., *Memorials of the great civil war 1646-52*.

<sup>4</sup> In the Society of Antiquaries Papers now in the National Library (2208, xviii, f. 30) there is a letter which seems worthy of quotation here:

Edin<sup>r</sup>. 16th Dec<sup>r</sup>. 1797 Sir, You have given me two Guineas for the Stand of Colours entrusted to my care. I am Sir Your most humble Ser<sup>t</sup>. Donald Mackintosh. N.B. The Colours are green redd white and of great antiquity being carried ag<sup>t</sup>. Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester By Sir — Stewart of Garscube Bar<sup>t</sup>. To Mr John Mackliesh at West Church.

<sup>5</sup> *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Vols. x and xi, Introductions and texts.

families, for before the Royal visit the Council examined various Earls and Lords as to what they had in their possession, without much success.<sup>1</sup> It may be that the hanging was at one time in the possession of the Tweeddale family and only later passed to a cadet branch.

Naturally the officials of Edinburgh were much concerned with the arrangements for the Royal visit; one of these was Mr John Hay, Depute Clerk of the city,<sup>2</sup> who was later knighted and who was a staunch supporter of the Royalist cause throughout a long public career.<sup>3</sup> Sir John's estate of Barro was only a few miles distant from Hopes, in East Lothian, and it is possible that the hanging passed from one family to the other at an early date.

#### DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE EDINBURGH HANGING

The second hanging (NT 14; Pl. LI) measures 4 ft. 7 in. by 5 ft. 2 in. The background is dark green baize, now tacked round the edge to a mounting of wooden boards. Unlike the Hay hanging the ground of the appliqué work is canvas with the thick padding lying between it and the baize. The canvas is intact, and the padding of unspun wool is still plump and hard. The canvas was covered with coloured satin cloths, the details are in cord and embroidery, and the pattern is edged by couched thread and cord.

The design and execution are more sophisticated than the Hay hanging. The main differences in the composition are the helmet and mantling surmounted by the royal badge and initials above the shield in place of the crown, flowers and banners; the medallions hanging from the collars; the rose and thistle at the base; and the different motto.

The silks are now in very poor condition, dirty and faded, mainly buff coloured except the red, and the blue, which can be seen to have been a bright sky-blue colour. The cord used is mainly of one type, a tightly spun silk core covered by a spun thread twisted round it. This is quite stiff, in places with a lead-coloured crust, and was probably metal-covered. Other cord, on the mantling, is 2 ply. There was less embroidery than on the Hay hanging, and this has mainly decayed. There was no lattice stitch shading, but fine detail such as the animal's features, the jewels and small medallions bearing St Andrew and St George are, like the Hay hanging, in fine satin or long and short stitch. Satin stitch in a heavier yarn over sewn linen padding is used for bolder detail, e.g. lettering. The ermine on the mantling is worked in black thread. The rose (which appears to have been white, not red) and thistle are simpler. Some details have a special applied padding, either sewn linen for satin stitch (for the harp), or strips of felt for satin stitch (for the flower stems and royal initials), or twill wool cloth for satin stitch, or silk cloth quilted onto it (for the lions on the shield and the cherub-head on the neck of the helmet).

The much smaller mount has been undecorated, but the motto is more elaborate, the lettering on a blue ground within two frames of cord and red couched threads. The letters are outlined with cord and apparently filled by stem stitch.

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, Vol. x, p. 521.

<sup>3</sup> *S.H.R.*, Vol. xv, 124-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1604-1626, passim.*

The unicorn's chain is made of contiguous circles of heavy cord linked by bars of a different cord. His horn has been made as a separate unit in the round, and sewn in place. Special care has been taken with the face-piece of the helmet, for here alone the foundation canvas has been cut away to leave bars, heavily embroidered, and a satin cloth has been inserted above the stuffing to give a three dimensional effect.

Although described in the catalogue entry (NT 14) as 'Royal Arms and supporters in sewed work, time of Charles I, from Council Chambers, Edinburgh', this hanging is much more likely to be from Charles II's time. Soon after his restoration in 1660, Edinburgh began to prepare for his first Parliament<sup>1</sup>; Charles ordered them to prepare the Inner Parliament House 'in that forme and fashioun as it wont to be when the Lords of his Majesties Counsell and Sessioun or the Committee of the Estates did sitt there'. In the next year, 1661, the Council 'Appoynts the Thesaurer . . . to agrie with Robert Porteous for imbrothering the Kings Majesties armes as formerlie to be put up in the Sessioun hous . . .'.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this is the embroidery in the Museum. It may also be significant that in 1662 the Council appointed the Treasurer 'to caus paint the Kings armes upon a lairge broad and to set them up in the Counsell hous in the most convenient point there'<sup>3</sup>; painted arms were good enough for the Burgh's Council Chamber, but an embroidery was needed for Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

Another possible date of origin and purpose for it is contained in an interesting letter published in *Reliquiae Antiquae Scotiae*, a miscellany of documents edited by G. R. Kinloch and printed in 1848.<sup>5</sup> The letter is headed 'Whitehall, March 17, 1668' and was written jointly by the Lords Lauderdale and Bellenden. It begins 'Right Honourable - Wee have received the Note of such things as are to be provided for the Councill and Session house; And in order to the providing of them Wee went in to London yesterday:' Descriptions and prices of hangings (tapestries), table carpets, chairs, clocks, candlesticks and a Mace precede 'The peece of Hanging with the King's Armes for the Session house will be longest a doing, but it shall be bespoke'.

Since writing this paper, we have received a note from A. S. Cavallo, Curator of Textiles, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. Two samples from the Hay hanging were examined by Mr Young of the Research Laboratory in that museum. The first was black yarn taken from the edge of one of the appliqué units, which proved to be of unripe cotton fibres. Mr Cavallo comments 'this surprises me somewhat, since these yarns in other embroideries we have examined have proven to be of wool, occasionally of silk'. The other was the hair used for padding, which is horse hair.

<sup>1</sup> *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, 1655-1665*, p. 209.

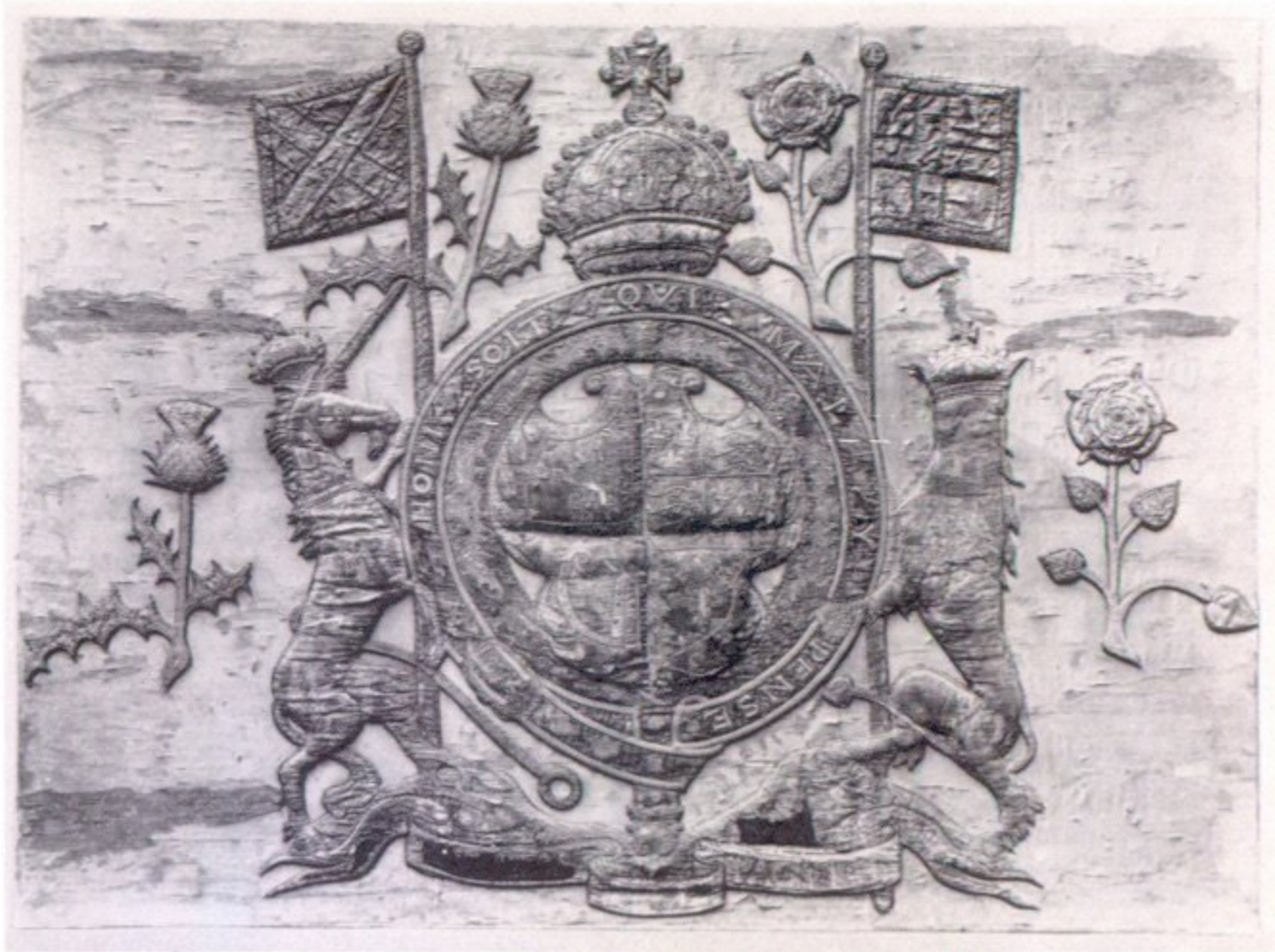
<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> Edinburgh was responsible at this time for the upkeep and decoration of the Parliament House (which included the 'Session house') as it had been for its erection - see *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, Vol. XIII, pp. 1-78.

<sup>5</sup> pp. 146-7.





The Hay hanging – the arms of James VI and I



The hanging from the Council Chambers, Edinburgh – the arms of Charles II





Details from the Hay hanging