

# Objects in Focus

Every month the museum will give you the opportunity to glimpse at an aspect of our diverse collection and giving you an insight into the existing history of Petersfield.



This month we have selected an object that has had a long and often rather cryptic history.

The Coat of Arms.

# Royal Coat of Arms

The Coat of Arms (Stuart) hung in what is now the museum building when it was still being used as a magistrates court. And until 1967 it was displayed in the main courtroom.

However it was decided in 1967 that it was too fragile to remain on display and was moved to the magistrates retiring room (now museum offices) and replaced by Queen Elizabeth II's Royal Coat of Arms.



The Stuart Coat of Arms remained in the courthouse building until the magistrates court finally closed, there were then debates as to where this Coat of Arms should go. One idea was for it to be displayed in St Peter's Church as it was traditional practice to display Royal Coat of Arms in the established church of a town.

However it was finally decided that the Coat of Arms should stay in the courthouse building to be displayed in the new museum which was opened in 1999.

# Royal Coat of Arms

The establishment of the display of the Stuart Coat of Arms is not the end of the story for this object.

In 2004 the Coat of Arms underwent conservation work by Hampshire Museums Service and it was during this work that some interesting information was discovered.

Not long after the Coat of Arms was moved to the retiring room in 1967 it was subject to some dubious 'restoration' work by an over-zealous enthusiast who decided it needed to be repainted, however the individual ended up colouring the field of the first and fourth quarters ("France") red instead of blue.



One of the quarters as it is today.

The Coat of Arms Prior to restoration work. Notice the first and fourth quarters are completely red, in comparison to how they look today

# Royal Coat of Arms

It was also discovered that on the head of the Dexter supporter (right side from the Latin *dextra*, right) is a ducal crown, not a royal crown as it was originally thought, meaning that it was not the Royal Coat of Arms of the Stuart king Charles II as had been suggested in the past.



Dexter Supporter showing the Ducal Crown.

It also became apparent when the layers of paint were removed that the Sinister supporter (left side from the Latin *sinistra* left) which is a unicorn has feet that look more like paws than hooves, after closer inspection evidence that the head may have been replaced can be seen in the wood. It was suggested that the original head of the Sinister supporter could have been a greyhound.

It was also discovered that there was a baton sinister over the arms, this is a narrow strip that runs from the upper right to the lower left of the arms and is traditionally the sign of illegitimate birth.



The Baton sinister, a sign of illegitimacy

# Royal Coat of Arms

The College of Arms suggested that the arms were not those of Charles II but probably intended for one of his illegitimate children. The baton was used as a mark for his illegitimate children, and added to the knowledge that the greyhound was the sinister supporter of the arms of the Duke of Southampton, a title his son Charles, Duke of Cleveland also held it becomes likely that these were his Coat of Arms.



Arms of Charles FitzRoy, 1st Duke of Southampton and 2nd Duke of Cleveland.

Image courtesy of <http://www.europeanheraldry.org>.



There is a similarity with the Coat of Arms in the museum collection and the Arm of Charles FitzRoy, the unicorn on the one above looks more like a greyhound when compared with the Arms on the left.