



Mr. Ian Musselwhite with the restored coat of arms.

ca 1972

Patient Ian brings life to town's arms

Stroller
by Jon Holliday

THE historic 17th century Cowbridge coat of arms has been restored after three months' intensive work by a Cardiff expert.

The 5ft. by 4ft. oil painting depicting the "cow on the bridge" is thought to be more than 300 years old, and not been cleaned for at least 150 years. It had been restored then following a bad cut in the canvas — but what caused such damage seems to have been forgotten.

Mr. Ian Musselwhite, a picture restorer for 30 years in London, Bristol and Cardiff, and now of Oxford Arcade, The Hayes, told me: "When I started, the painting was almost black all over and in very poor condition.

"The atmospheric conditions, dust, smoke and the discolouration of the varnish obscured it.

"A lot of people just didn't realise what the painting was, or indeed that there was anything on the canvas at all. The layers and layers of coach varnish had darkened over the years. The colours were there, but could not be revealed until all the varnish was removed.

"Having 'fixed' the front,

I then peeled away the old, damaged canvas, transferring the painting to new canvas, restoring any parts where paint had flaked off over the years, finally re-varnishing with clear varnish that will not discolour.

"I enjoy picture restoring. It's delicate work that requires a great deal of patience. I enjoy it. It's my life."