

II.

LETTER TO THE SECRETARY, PRESENTING THE SILVER CHAIN KNOWN AS “MIDSIDE MAGGIE’S GIRDLE” TO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES; WITH NOTES UPON THE STORY OF THE GIRDLE AND ITS OWNERS. BY ROBERT ROMANES, Esq., F.S.A. SCOT., AND JAMES CURLE, JUN., LIBRARIAN.

DAVID CHRISTISON, Esq.,
Secretary,
The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

DEAR SIR,—We have acquired “Midside Maggie’s Girdle” for the purpose of presenting it to the National Museum of Antiquities for Scotland for preservation; and we send it herewith, along with the bag in which it has hitherto been kept, and which we believe to be the original bag in which the Duke of Lauderdale presented it to the Hardies.

We shall be gratified by the acceptance of the “Girdle” as a Memorial of the late Alexander Curle, Esq. [of Morriston], Priorwood, Melrose, who took such a keen interest in the Society.

A paper containing all the information which we have been able to gather about the Girdle is appended.—We are, yours faithfully,

ROBERT ROMANES.
 JAMES CURLE, JUN.

The silver chain commonly known as “Midside Maggie’s Girdle,” which forms the subject of this paper, has already, on two occasions, been described in the *Proceedings* of the Society. To the description of the girdle given in the papers by the late Dr John Alex. Smith¹ and by Mr Alexander J. S. Brook,² there is little or nothing to add;³

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. x. p. 321.

² *Proceedings*, vol. xxiii. p. 445. In Mr Brook’s paper the weight of the girdle is given as 3 oz. 19 dwt., instead of 7 oz. 11 dwt.

³ At a meeting of the Berwickshire Naturalists’ Club held on 6th June 1894, in exhibiting the girdle, Mr Romanes contributed some notes dealing with the letters B.C., which are engraved upon the circular plate which forms the clasp. The girdle was manufactured, as we now know from the Hall Marks, in 1608–9. It had therefore in all probability been in the hands of the Lauderdale family for some years before its presentation to “Midside Maggie.” In 1611, Barbara Cranstoun of Murrays-town [now Morriston] and Corsbie married Sir James Seton of Gordon. Barbara Cranstoun was related to the Lauderdale family through the marriage, in 1540, of

but it seems right that in handing it over for preservation in the National Museum there should be placed on record some further account of the tradition associated with it, and of the families who have treasured it as a precious heirloom.

The story of the girdle has been told in several publications. The earliest version, as far as we have been able to ascertain, is contained in a volume of verse, entitled *St Baldred of the Bass, and other Poems*, by James Miller, published in 1824. In this volume there appears a poem entitled "The Gudewife of Tulloshill and the Lord of Lauderdale." It was from this poem that Chambers derived his version of the story given in his *Picture of Scotland*, published in 1827, and upon Chambers's version, Miss Margaret Corbet founded her story of "Muirside Maggie," communicated to *Friendship's Offering* in 1829. The best known of the stories founded on the girdle is probably that in *The Tales of the Borders*, entitled "Midside Maggie, or the Bannock of Tollishill." The story is told in the *Proceedings* in Dr Smith's paper, deprived in some measure of the embellishments which Miller and later writers undoubtedly added to it, but we may be permitted in the circumstances to repeat it here.

Thomas Hardie was the tenant of John, the second Earl, and afterwards Duke of Lauderdale, in the Farm of Tullis, on Tollishill, or a portion of Tollishill, known as the Midside Farm. His wife was Margaret Lylestone, "Midside Maggie," the heroine of the story. A severe winter destroyed his flock, and on that account and for other reasons, he was unable to pay his rent. His wife, in distress, went to the Earl at Thirlestane Castle to lay their case before him. The Earl, half-jokingly we may suppose, told her that since snow was so plentiful at Tollishill, he would consider her petition if she brought him a snow-ball in June. The snow was preserved in a cleuch in the hills, and

Sir Richard Maitland with Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Cranstoun of Corsbie, and it is not improbable that the girdle, which had been made shortly before her marriage, formed a wedding gift on that occasion, and that her initials were engraved upon its clasp. The property of Corsbie itself was acquired by the Duke of Lauderdale in 1671, from the wadsetters of John Cranston, and the girdle may have come into the Lauderdale family through the family connection, or with the acquisition of the property.



Fig. 1. Midside Maggie's Girdle. (4.)

when June came round again Midside Maggie carried her snowball to Thirlestane and reminded the Earl of his promise. Pleased with her ingenuity and ready wit, Lord Lauderdale gave the relief claimed, and the Hardies prospered in their farm. In the Civil War which broke out shortly after, Lauderdale followed the fortunes of the Royalist cause ; he was taken prisoner at the Battle of Worcester in 1651, and was confined in the Tower and other prisons for a number of years. During all this period the Hardies laid aside their rents, and out of gratitude Margaret Hardie baked the gold pieces due into a bannock, and, betaking her way to London, conveyed them to the imprisoned Earl. On his release soon afterwards, obtained through the favour of Monk, he went to Holland, and returned with the King in May 1660. On revisiting Scotland he presented Margaret Hardie with this silver girdle, and, it is said, allowed her and her children to hold their farm rent free for their lives, with the remark, which became proverbial, that "every bannock had its maik but the bannock of Tollishill."

Such, then, is the story which has been handed down with the girdle, and, though it may have gained something in the telling, there is little doubt that it records a great service rendered to Lauderdale of which this ancient silver chain was the reward.

We have been unable to trace any earlier recorded reference to the story than Miller's ballad, and it is doubtful whether any exists unless it be in the mass of Lauderdale papers preserved in the British Museum. Tollishill, like many another moorland farm in Lauderdale, lay out of the beaten track of travellers, and there is nothing surprising in the fact that for more than a hundred and fifty years the story of Margaret Hardie and her girdle should not have found its way into print.

Miller evidently found the story as a tradition. "This ballad," he writes in the short preface to his poem, "is founded on a traditional story which I have gathered from different sources and put into a connected form. The hero was John the second Earl, and afterwards Duke of Lauderdale. . . . The heroine was Margaret Lylestone, wife to Thomas Hardie, ténant in Tulloshill. There were anciently three farms of Tullos in Lammermoor, and from her abode, by way of dis-

tion, she was called *Midside Maggie*. The adventure noticed in the following ballad must have occurred after the battle of Worcester in 1651, where the Duke of Lauderdale was taken prisoner and suffered confinement in the Tower for nine years, till liberated by General Monk in 1660; when repairing to The Hague, he returned with the King at the Restoration." It must also be noticed that on the title page immediately preceding this preface there is printed "Every bannock had its maik but the bannock o' Tulloshill. Old Proverb," the saying always associated with the tale of the girdle.

Mr Miller's embellishments are doubtless not a few, and it is difficult to separate them from the story upon which his ballad is founded, but the preface is evidently intended as a statement of facts, and we cannot but regard it as of importance, first, in the light of the connection of the Hardies with Tollishill and with the girdle, which we can prove from other sources; and secondly, from the quotation of the proverb and the reference to the date of the occurrence of the adventure mentioned in the ballad, both of which appear to us to show that Margaret Hardie's baking of the bannock, and her journey to London, formed part of the tradition repeated to Miller, and that they were not incidents added to the story by him.

The connection of the Hardies with Tollishill is shown from the extracts from the Lauderdale Estate books which follow. The fact of Lauderdale's imprisonment is of course well known; but the details of his confinement as given in the "Calendar of State Papers" are of interest in connection with the story.

In 1645, John, Earl of Lauderdale, succeeded to the family estates of which Tollishill formed a part. The farm extends northward towards the Lammerlaw, from which it is distant about a mile, and it slopes from an altitude of about 1200, to 1670 feet. In 1647 we learn from the estate books preserved at Thirlestane Castle that the Hardies were tenants of Tollishill from the following entry made in that year.

"Imprimis the said Mr Alex. Home (the Factor) charges himself with £208, 6s. 8d., received be him frae Andrew Hardie and Bessie Lylestoun in Tullishill, as also with £325 fra Richard Hardie thair

upon the 8th September 1647, extending in the hail to £533, 6s. 8d., as ane part of thair Whitsunday mail 1647."

The farm seems to have been let in three separate holdings, as we find from the same source that on 14th August 1656, the Countess of Lauderdale granted three separate leases of portions of Tollishill. To Alexander Hardie the east side of the lands at the rent of £416, 4s. To Andrew Hardie the half of the west side at the rent of £325, 4s. 8d., and to Richard and Thomas Hardie, younger, equally, half of the west side at the rent of £325, 4s. 8d, the aggregate rent being £1066, 13s. 4d. Scots.

In 1649, Lauderdale joined Charles II. in Holland, and was in 1650, discharged to enter the Kingdom. He, however, came over with the King; and on 3d September 1651, he was taken prisoner at the battle of Worcester. From the "Calendar of State Papers" in the *Proceedings of the Council of State* we can trace some details of his imprisonment. After the battle he was confined with other Royalist prisoners in the Castle of Chester. On the 11th September, the Militia Commissioners of the County of Stafford were ordered by the Council of State to give him up to Colonel Lilburne, which is followed by an order five days later that he is to be brought from Chester to London, where he was lodged in the Tower. On 28th November, the Countess of Dirleton obtains "liberty to speak with the Earl of Lauderdale and Lord Barganey (Abergavenny) about some business in the presence of the Lieutenant (of the Tower), and to take John Pulford with her."

In the following year, 1652, the Council of State permits "The Countess of Lauderdale with her daughter and two maids to have liberty to repair to the Earl of Lauderdale, prisoner in the Tower, at their pleasure."

During the years 1653, and 1654, Lauderdale remained in the Tower, but in 1655, he was transferred to Portland Castle, as we learn from a petition by the Countess to the Protector in which she asks for a grant of part of her husband's estate. "Her condition is exceeding sad, losing all means of subsistence and the comforts of this life by her husband being sent away to Portland Castle."

In 1657, he had been removed from Portland, as appears from an Order of the Council advising the Treasury Commissioners to make certain payments to Major John Pitson, Governor of Portland Castle, including a sum of £6, for the guard who conveyed the Earl of Lauderdale from thence to Windsor Castle. At Windsor he probably remained until his release on Monk’s entry into London in March 1660.

On 5th May 1654, the Lauderdale Estates were declared forfeited; but a provision of £300 a year was secured to the Countess of Lauderdale and her family, which, in 1655, was increased by Order of Council by an additional allowance of £200 a year, from residue undisposed of.

During the period of Lauderdale’s imprisonment more than one entry from the estate books shows that the Hardies, notwithstanding the forfeiture of the estates, continued to hold themselves as tenants, and from time to time to pay rent to Lauderdale. The leases, entered into in 1656, have already been noticed, but there are also the following entries:—

Accounts, William Duncan, Servitor to the Countess of Lauderdale, of the rents received fra the tenants for the crops 1656–1657.

Item fra Andrew Hardie in Tullishill at diverse tymes £511, 3s. 8d.

Item fra Richard and Thomas Hardie at diverse times £425.

Item fra Alexander Hardie at diverse times £694, 13s.

In the accounts of William Blair in connection with the Lauderdale Estate for crops and years 1656–57, ’58, and 1659, various sums are entered as received in name of the Countess of Lauderdale from the Hardies for Tollishill, and the auditor notes with reference to his accounts: “He produces no rental according to which he should have received the full rent of these lands; and it being then a time of trouble he was necessitated to take from the tenants what they could give, and he could get.”

In the prefatory note to Miller’s ballad already mentioned, he states that “the heroine was Margaret Lylestone, wife of Thomas Hardie, tenant of Tulloshill.” Although the names of Hardies and Lylestones are intermingled in the pages of the estate books, we do not find a Margaret Lylestone, wife of Thomas Hardie. The name

Margaret Hardie does indeed occur between 1666, and 1700, but she was clearly the wife of Andrew Hardie, and in the later entries is described as his relict. The name of Bessie Lylestone appears as already noted in 1647, coupled with that of Andrew Hardie, as though she held a joint tenancy with him. In 1643, and 1644, Thomas Hardie made payment for *parsonage teind Newbigging*, each year £55, 11s. 2d., but in 1648, we find that this payment was made by Bessie Lylestone, who in the same year paid 400 merks, for Tullishill, the other tenants having been then Andrew and Richard, but the name of Thomas Hardie's wife is not given.

There can be little doubt that since Margaret Hardie received the girdle, it has never left Lauderdale, and for nearly 150 years it has remained an heirloom in the family of Simson of Blainslie, a property which now forms part of the Lauderdale Estates. The tradition handed down with the girdle in the Simson family in noways differs from that which we have already stated, and it is needless to say that it has always been regarded as a true narrative of its acquisition.

The descent of the girdle from the wife of Thomas Hardie to her immediate descendants is a matter of conjecture. Down to 1700, the Hardies remained the tenants of Tollishill, but at what date their tenancy ceased is doubtful. In 1778, the farm was let to Robert Paterson, but long before that time, Thomas Hardie and his wife must have passed away, and all that we can say is that Janet Hardie, the ancestor of the Simsons, from whom they acquired the girdle, was the granddaughter of Simon Hardie, tenant of Westmains Farm, on the Lauderdale Estates. Simon Hardie was born in 1669, and died in 1747, and it is not improbable that he was the son or grandson of Midside Maggie.

In 1737, his eldest son, Thomas Hardie, married Agnes Grieve, daughter of David Grieve, portioner of Blainslie. Their marriage contract, dated 8th August 1737, is still preserved. Thomas Hardie, who had succeeded his father in Westmains, died on 13th June 1781, aged 69. From a precept of Clare Constat, dated 30th November 1813, in favour of John Simson of Blainslie, we learn that Thomas Hardie and Agnes Grieve had only one child, a daughter, Janet Hardie, born 22nd June 1738. Janet Hardie, on 3rd March 1758, married John Sim-

son, and brought with her the girdle into the family. She left a family of thirteen children, and on her death the girdle passed to her second son, *Thomas (I.)*, following a family tradition, that the “*Thomas*” of the family should always be the holder of the girdle. *Thomas Simson (I.)* died unmarried, leaving the girdle to his nephew, *Thomas Simson (II.)*, the second son of his brother, *John Simson* of *Blainslie*. This *Thomas Simson* was latterly a joint-proprietor of *Blainslie*. On his death in 1874, he left by his will “my silver chain, known as *Midside Maggie’s Girdle*,” to his second son, *Mr Thomas Simson (III.)*, who still survives.

In 1876, the property of *Blainslie* was sold, and in 1880, *Mr Thomas Simson*, being about to leave this country for *America*, agreed to deposit the girdle in the hands of *Mr Romanes*, *Lauder*, who has since retained it.

Mr Alexander Curle of *East Morriston* being very desirous that so interesting a relic should not run the risk of being lost sight of, but should be preserved in this country, agreed with his cousin, *Mr Robert Romanes*, to enter into negotiations with the owner, *Mr Simson*, with a view to acquiring it. Unhappily, *Mr Curle* did not live to see the project carried out. He died on 5th January 1897, shortly after which the negotiations were brought to a completion, and we have now the gratification of presenting the girdle to the *National Museum of Antiquities for Scotland*, and thus carrying out the plan which was resolved on during *Mr Curle’s* lifetime.

Note.—Since the above paper was printed, *Mr Romanes*, too, has passed away. He died in *Lauder* on 28th July 1898, and with him there have gone many traditions of the old-world burgh where his life was spent, and of *Lauderdale*.

J. C. Jun.

[GENEALOGY.]

MIDSIDE MAGGIE'S GIRDLE.

GENEALOGY SHOWING TRANSMISSION.

THE GIRDLE WAS PROBABLY PRESENTED BY THE DUKE OF LAUDERDALE ABOUT 1672-5 TO THE MOTHER OR GRANDMOTHER OF

