

II.

NOTICE OF FOUR ANCIENT SCOTTISH STANDARDS, WITH DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE RECENTLY DISCOVERED MARCHMONT STANDARD. BY SIR JAMES BALFOUR PAUL, C.V.O., LL.D., F.S.A. SCOT.

Old writers divide knightly and baronial flags into two classes—the Banner, a large flag of a square or oblong shape which had the arms of the owner painted or embroidered on it; and the Standard, which was very long and narrow in proportion to its length and terminated in a pointed, rounded, or swallow-tailed end. Originally designed for fixing immediately below the head of a lance, and then styled a Pennon, they gradually evolved a much more ornate character. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the length of the king's standard is prescribed as 8 or 9 yards, that of a duke 7, an earl's 6, a baron's 5, and a knight's 4. But in practice it is hardly likely that this academic rule was observed. It is evident, however, that the flag was no longer an appendage to a lance but was carried on a pole shaft of its own, and now served as a rallying point or as indicating the noble or knight to whom his attendant "plump of spears" and other vassals belonged. A much abbreviated standard was all that was required; indeed, standards of the length indicated above would have been cumbersome in the extreme. The flag that was carried in battle became therefore more of a pennon than a standard. Unlike the banner, there was not, from its shape, room to put the full armorial bearings of its owner on it; instead of these a very ingenious and beautiful compromise was arrived at. In the English standards there was invariably the cross of St George on the portion next the staff; then the rest of the flag was divided horizontally into two or more parts, these being of the owner's livery colours, that is, the colours of the principal metal and principal colour on his shield of arms. On these horizontal divisions were scattered the family badge or charges taken from the arms. Across all this, and dividing these charges from each other, were put slanting bands containing a motto.

The Scottish standards which have come down to us differ to a certain extent from this pattern. None of them are divided transversely, and in none of them are there the oblique bands with the motto: the latter being borne straight along the surface of the flag. As might be expected, too, the cross of St George is replaced by that of St Andrew when there is a cross, but in some cases it is absent, as we shall see immediately.

THE CAVERS STANDARD. (Fig. 1.)

This interesting flag, which was publicly exhibited for the first time at the Heraldic Exhibition held at Edinburgh in 1891, has given rise to much speculation. One tradition, adopted by Sir Walter Scott,¹ holds that it is the standard of James, second Earl of Douglas, carried by his natural son, Archibald Douglas, ancestor of the Cavers family, at the battle of Otterburn. But against this it may be noted that Archibald Douglas was very young in 1388, and survived the battle many years; while Froissart indicates that both the Earl and his standard-bearer were slain, and that the Earl's flag was suspended over his tomb at Melrose. Another tradition holds that the flag was not originally a Douglas standard at all but was that of Percy Hotspur, which was captured

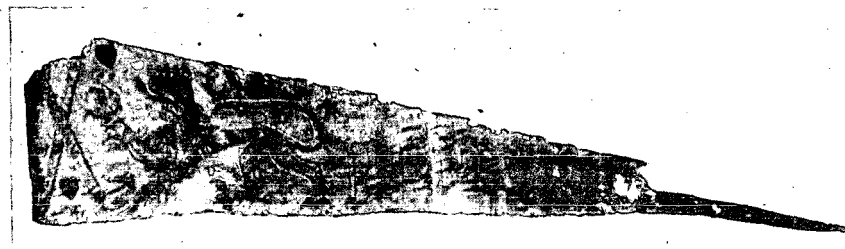


Fig. 1. The Cavers Standard.

from him by Douglas before the walls of Newcastle, and that it was to recover the flag that Percy undertook the expedition which ended so disastrously at Otterburn.

Lord Southesk wrote a long and elaborate paper on this standard, which was read to this Society on 10th February 1902, and anyone desiring the fullest information about it is referred to that paper. The author dismisses the theory that the flag was a Percy one with Douglas charges added to it. "Knights of old," he says, "did not deck themselves with their enemies' cognisances, like Red Indians clutching at scalps." We can fully accept the fact that the standard is a Douglas one and a Douglas one only: the presence of the saltire at the hoist stamps it undoubtedly as an unaltered Scottish flag.

Let us see what the charges are on this ancient standard, and what its general appearance is. It is of sage-green silk, 12 feet long by 3 feet 1 inch wide, narrowing to the ends, which may originally have been forked. At the hoist of the flag there is the St Andrew's cross, with a

¹ *Minstrelsy*: Notes to "The Battle of Otterburn."

red heart between its lower extremities, and another on the top of its sinister side: whether there was one on the corresponding position on the dexter is not certain, as that part of the flag has been torn away. Then we have a splendid lion passant armed and langued gules: beyond him a tau cross beneath a mullet; and finally, the motto running horizontally along the flag, said to be *Jamais Areyre*, in Old English letters. These devices and inscriptions are painted in what appears to be size- or water-colour of a greyish-black hue, with darker black hues on their shadowed sides, the sides towards the light of the saltire, lion and mullet being outlined in white, and those of the tau cross and motto in yellow.

First, then, we have the St Andrew's cross, which conclusively marks the standard as a Scottish one: the hearts and mullet are well-known Douglas charges. The lion is more difficult to account for. There is a lion passant on the seal of Malcolm, Earl of Angus about 1232, but he was not a Douglas. The second Earl of Douglas who fell at Otterburn bore a lion as a single supporter to his arms, but it is hardly likely that a supporter would be chosen as a charge on a standard. The second Earl of Angus did bear on his seal a lion rampant for Angus quartered with Douglas, and it is probable that the position of the lion being passant instead of rampant is due entirely to considerations of space: this is the case in other flags, as will be shown later. Lord Southesk is of opinion that what evidence we have rather points to the flag being the property of the Angus side of the family. But how, then, did it get to Cavers, where it has been for many long years? Lord Southesk ventures on the explanation that George, fourth Earl of Angus, who was appointed in 1449 Warden of the Middle Marches, is known to have given a commission to Sir Archibald Douglas of Cavers as Keeper of Hermitage Castle. It is possible, therefore, he suggests, that this standard was originally assigned as an ensign to be displayed on the walls of that fortress. When it passed from the hands of the Douglasses in 1491, the Keeper naturally took the flag with him to Cavers.¹ Against that theory there is the comparatively small size of the flag, which would make but a poor display on the ramparts of a castle, where it is more likely that a larger banner would be placed. But in the wild and breezy uplands of Roxburghshire something that would catch the wind less than a banner may have been thought preferable.

The tau cross is most mysterious. It is an uncommon charge in British heraldry. It appears in connection with (but not incorporated into) the arms of Stewart of Garlies in a curious cornice over a fireplace in the ruins of what was once Garlies Castle,² and was a charge in

¹ Fraser's *Douglas Book*, iii. 78. ² *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, v. p. 283.

the arms of the Drury and Fawke families in England. It is a curious coincidence that this uncommon charge should appear on a large genealogical tree of the Douglasses, now in the possession of the Earl of Home, commemorating a seventeenth-century alliance of a Glenbervie member of the Douglas family with one of the Druries of Rugham in England. Founding on this, the writer of an article on this flag, together with four others belonging to the burghs of Jedburgh, Selkirk, and Hawick, in the *Scotsman* of 15th December 1892, over the initials J. W., is of opinion that this standard must date from a period subsequent to the marriage of Lady Drury with Lord George Douglas, a grandson of the ninth Earl of Angus. But anyone conversant with the style of heraldic art prevalent in the seventeenth century has only to look at the flag to prove the erroneousness of this theory. Besides, why should a charge from the arms of the wife of a mere cadet of the Red Douglas branch appear on a standard at Cavers. The tau cross is in the arms of the Order of St Anthony, and it is just possible that the owner of this standard was a member of this Order.

There is a farther note of perplexity in this much-discussed flag in the fact that the motto *Jamais Areyre* does not appear on any Douglas seal until that of the eighth Earl of Angus in 1572, where the last word takes the more modern form of *arrière*. It had its beginning, no doubt, in the claim which the Earl of Angus made to the right of leading the vanguard of the Scottish army in battle, a claim which was confirmed to the tenth earl by Act of Parliament in 1592.¹ The use of mottoes in connection with armorial bearings was very rare, if not altogether unknown, in Scotland in the fourteenth century, but it is possible that this one may have been thought suitable enough for a standard which was to be conspicuously carried in battle. The balance of evidence appears on the whole to be rather against this being an Otterburn standard. But, undoubtedly, it is a very old flag, and one of the most interesting relics that have come down to us of the days of chivalry.

THE STANDARD OF KEITH, EARL MARISCHAL. (Fig. 2.)

This flag is a very much simpler affair than the one we have just been discussing, though none the less interesting. It was the property of William Keith, third Earl Marischal of Scotland, a somewhat sententious person if we are to judge by the nickname, "Hearken and take heed," given him from his frequent use of that phrase. The flag was carried at the battle of Flodden by the earl's standard-bearer, Black John Skirving of Flewlandhill, whose descendant, Mr William Skirving, presented it to the Faculty of Advocates in 1808. Along with it he wrote a letter—a

¹ *Acta Parl. Scot.*, iii. 588.

copy of which I am able, by the courtesy of Mr W. K. Dickson, keeper of the Advocates' Library, to give—and which relates the history of the flag.

Edinr. 1 March 1808.

“Sir,

“As You have lately expressed a wish to obtain for the purpose of being deposited in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates the Bandrol I shewed You many Years ago, having painted on it, the Arms & Motto of Keith Earl of Marischall; namely three Stags heads, & the words *Veritas Vincit*, This Bandrol is now sent You for the Purpose above expressed, and I authorize You in my name, to offer it to the acceptance of the Faculty as a most curious Scots relic.

“What I know of its history is, that it has been in Possession of our family (Skirving of Plewlandhill) from time immemorial, and the tradition of the family has been, that my Ancestor Black John Skirving carried it at the battle of Flodden field, as Standard bearer to Earl Marischall. At this disastrous battle my Predecessor was taken prisoner but saved the colours by tearing them from the Standard to which they were attached; & concealing them about his body. That he was kept prisoner in England some Years & upon his return, found another encroaching upon his lands but they were resigned to the Warrior on his re-appearance.

“You will see by the Map that the lands of Plewlandhill lye to the East of Keith Marischall in the Parish of Humbie, East Lothian, and are separated from that estate by the Lands of Laedon & Humbie; in the heart of the former estate were a few acres of Land belonging to Plewlandhill which according to my grandfather's relation, had been given by Keith Marischall to my predecessor to bait his horse on, when he came to receive the Earl's orders. And it was with great Difficulty & at the intercession of many friends that my Grandfather could be prevented joining Earl Marshall in the Rebellion of 1715, he having received orders to follow him & actually did so nearly to Lauder, where having met with some of his friends they prevailed on him to return for the sake of his numerous family.

“The materials & painted letters of this flag betoken considerable Antiquity, but I can now give no further proof with regard to it; having sold the lands and delivered over the Writings of them forty Years ago.

“I am,

“Your most obedt. Servant

“WILLIAM SKIRVING.

“To Mr William Gibb.”

It is doubtful whether the earl himself was present at the battle. Pitscottie says he was one of the lords nominated “to take the battell in hand,” but this has been denied. As, however, his standard was there, the probability is that he himself was.¹

The flag is, as I have said, a very simple one. It measures 4 feet 7 inches from the hoist to the end of the upper fork: the latter is 2 inches larger than the lower one. This measurement includes a piece of material from 1½ to 2 inches wide which runs along the edges of the hoist and which does not appear to be part of the original flag. This may be

¹ See Henry Weber's edition of the *Battle of Flodden Field* (Edinburgh, 1808), p. 201.

explained by the fact that Skirving tore the standard from its pole and wrapped it round his body, and the torn end has subsequently been repaired. It is possible, too, that this rending of the flag may account for the fact that it has no saltire at the hoist, as was usually the custom.



Fig. 2. The Standard of Keith, Earl Marischal.

The only heraldic badges on it are three harts' heads erased, two and one; and this device is not taken from the coat of arms but is the crest used as a badge without any crest wreath, and thrice repeated. Following the device is the family motto stretching along the flag, which terminates in a bifurcated end, *Veritas vincit*.

THE BELLENDEN STANDARD. (Fig. 3.)

Robert Scott, fifth Lord of Rankelburn and Murthockston, exchanged in 1415 his lands of Glenkerry, which was part of Rankelburn in Ettrick Forest, for the lands of Bellenden in Selkirkshire, then held by the monks of Melrose. He was the father of Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch. Bellenden was situated about nine miles west of Hawick, and about four miles east of Buccleuch itself, both now remote and solitary places. It was considered a convenient place for the gathering of the Scott clan from Ettrick, Kirkurd, and Murthockston.

“Whitslade, the Hawk, and Headshaw came,
And warriors more than I can name:
From Yarrow-cleugh to Hindhaugh-swaire,
From Woodhouselie to Chester-glen,
Troop'd man and horse, and bow and spear,
Their gathering word was Bellenden.”¹

¹ *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, canto iv.

The standard is blue and is peculiar in many respects. Not only has it no saltire, but the motto and charges on it read the reverse way—that is, from the fly to the hoist, instead of as usual from the hoist to the fly. The motto is simply a war-cry, "A Bellendane"; above and below this word are a crescent and a star taken from the Scott arms, and these are repeated at the hoist of the flag. At the end of Bellendane appears the family crest of a stag passant on a crest-wreath, a very uncommon occurrence on a flag of this sort; and above the stag is an earl's coronet. All this is in gold on the blue ground. The presence of the earl's coronet

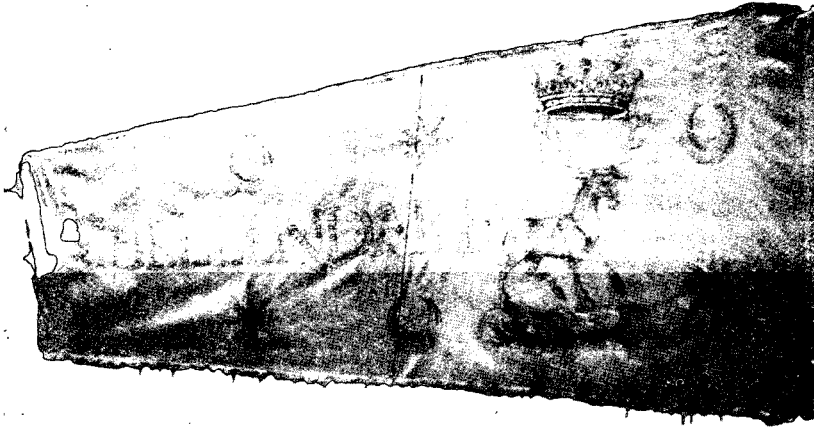


Fig. 3. The Bellenden Standard.

shows that the flag cannot have been made before 1619, the date of the creation of the earldom: it may indeed have been what is called in the account of the first earl's funeral in 1634, "the defunct's standard, caried by Mr William Scot, eldest sone to Lawrence Scot, Advocate"; but if so, it was certainly not copied, as Sir William Fraser thinks, from a more ancient banner which had been in many a border fray, for the very good reason that border frays rapidly became extinct after the Union of the Crowns. Whether the banner at present existing is really the one borne at the first earl's funeral is not very clear. It does not look 300 years old, and it may well be that it is a copy of it. On the other hand, if it was not used from the time of the first earl's funeral till 1815, when it was displayed at a great gathering of which I shall speak immediately, it may well be the original flag. Sir William Fraser,

however; thinks it more probable that it was made for the regiment of Francis, the second earl, when the army under General Leslie advanced into England and stormed Newcastle in 1644. But against this may be put the fact that if the banner was originally made for the first earl's funeral in 1634, there would hardly be any necessity for copying it within the short space of ten years.

Whatever may be the actual truth in this respect about the banner, there is no doubt that it was displayed on 4th December 1815 at a great football match on Carterhaugh, when Sir Walter Scott captained the "Sutors o' Selkirk" and the Ettrick Shepherd the opposing party, consisting of the dwellers in the vale of Yarrow. Scott describes the flag as "a very curious and ancient pennon," and both he and Hogg wrote poems for the occasion—that of Scott being entitled "The Lifting of the Banner," while Hogg's "excellent ditty," as Lockhart styles it, was called "The Ettrick Garland to the Ancient Banner of the House of Buccleuch." The standard was delivered by Lady Ann Scott to Sir Walter's son, the second Walter, "who attended, suitably mounted and armed, and riding over the field, displaying it to the sound of war pipes, and amid the acclamations of the assembled spectators, who could not be fewer than 2000 in number." This singularly ill-written sentence is from a newspaper of the day.¹

It is probable that the flag was not seen in public again till it was exhibited at the Heraldic Exhibition in 1891. Whatever its age may be, it must always be an interesting relic, as having inspired the muse both of Scott and Hogg.

THE MARCHMONT STANDARD. (Fig. 4.)

At the sale of the effects in Marchmont House in 1916 this flag came into the hands of a dealer, who purchased it casually along with, I believe, other oddments at the end of the sale. He shortly after sold it again, and the purchaser offered it to Mrs R. Finnie M'Ewen, the wife of the new proprietor of Marchmont, who acquired it and brought it back to its old home, where I have no doubt it will be well cared for, though naturally a Society like this must to a certain extent regret such a fine relic being in private hands. Before the purchase of the standard by Mrs M'Ewen, it was carefully examined by Mr Andrew Ross, Ross Herald, the well-known authority on Scottish flags, and this paper is much indebted to his notes, which he has kindly allowed me to use.

The length of the pennon from hoist to fly is 9 feet 6 inches, and the depth at the hoist is 36½ inches. It gradually tapers until at a line drawn through the red collar of the popinjay on the upper limb of the

¹ Quoted in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, iii. 395.

jay it is 7 inches in depth. From that point to the extremity of the upper limb the length of the pennon is now $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches, though originally it must have been a couple of inches or so longer.

The flag is attached rather slightly to a sheath of stout linen which slips on to the pole. This sheath is probably not so old as the pennon itself, though there is still attached to it a green silk tassel which may have been an original appendage.

The fabric is of fine silk and almost entire, though there are a few rents and holes, and the flag is naturally from its age somewhat frail. It is now, however, carefully preserved within two sheets of glass, which

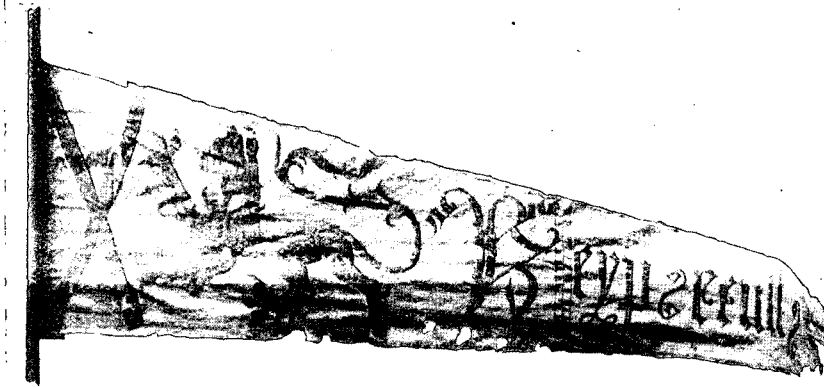


Fig. 4. The Marchmont Standard.

should keep it in good condition for quite an indefinite period. It consists of two pieces of silk which are joined at the selvedge ends just after the letter K of the motto. The ground of the silk, originally red, is now faded to a kind of old gold, and takes in certain lights a greenish tinge. The selvedges retain a deeper shade of the original red. The join shows no indication of having been interfered with since the day on which it was made; there are in consequence one or two creases in the fabric, and these have retained a still deeper tinge of red. The thread used in the join retains its original colour. The lower limb of the fly is incomplete, a fragment of 10 inches in length by 1 to 2 in depth being wanting.

Along the lower edge of the pennon runs the foot selvedge, which repeats the green running through the selvedges at the join. The upper edge of the flag, being cut diagonally so as to slope down to the fly,

has no selvedge, but a thin strip of coloured stuff, no doubt originally green (green being one of the livery colours of the Homes), is run along the edge to prevent it from fraying. Probably some time after the flag was made, but how long after it is hard to say, a green ribbon was sewn round the edges, including those between the two limbs of the fly, but it has been there long enough for it and the thread used to sew it with to fade into different shades.

The charges on the pennon are painted on one side only of the flag, but they show well through on the reverse, where a wash has been used to give a clear outline to the devices and lettering.

At the hoist there is, as should be in all Scottish standards, the cross of St Andrew; its limbs are not, as in the case of the cross of St George in English standards, extended to the edge of the fabric but stop a little way short. After the saltire comes a lion passant—a very fine example of Scottish heraldic work of the sixteenth century. It is full of grace and power. It is, of course, not a natural lion, but what these old artists aimed at was, as Ruskin points out, not a natural correctness of form but a clear outline emphasising the salient characteristics of the animal, so that in the mist and storm of battle it should be clearly distinguished from any other cognisance for which otherwise it might be mistaken. The Homes bore on their arms a rampant not a passant lion, but the exigencies of space compelled the artist to paint it in the latter position, just as was done in the case of the Cavers banner.

Following the lion comes the motto in two words, KEYP REULL. This is not a family motto of the Homes or anyone else. It occurs, so far as I know, only on this flag; but a more appropriate "dittay," as it used to be called, for a Warden of the Marches—as many of the Homes were—it would be difficult to compose. Each of the two words is followed by an ornamented flourish.

After the motto and on each limb of the flag comes the parrot or popinjay. The Homes bore three of those birds on the second and third quarters on their shield, commemorating a very ancient heiress, Nicola Pepdie of Dunglass, who married Sir Thomas Home somewhere in the latter part of the fourteenth century. One or two other families had popinjays in their arms, such as Fairfoul and Peebles, but none of them had any connection with the Border. The birds are green, with red beak and claws, and traces of this colour are to be seen in the popinjay on the upper limb of the flag. It is also collared or gorged gules, an old fashion of decorating the bird which has now become obsolete.

In the present Home arms the birds are not collared, nor have been for a very long time; but Sir David Lindsay in his *Heraldic MS.* of the middle of the sixteenth century gives them red collars. It is, however,

rare to find such an ornament to a parrot in Scottish heraldry: the only other instance of which I am aware is on a sculptured shield in Trinity College Church, which professes to bear the arms of John Brady, who was Provost of the church about 1500. The shield bears one parrot with a very well-defined collar round his neck.

The lower limb of the flag bears traces of part of a second popinjay, but the theory that there may have been a third on an imaginary extension of the lower limb seems to be excluded by its shape. There were no doubt three popinjays in the family arms, but there was no rule as to what was to be put on standards: the artist was left a very free hand within the limits of certain conventions.

For whom was the pennon made? Evidently, judging from the motto, for a Warden of the Marches. Several of the Lords Home held this office: Alexander, second Lord Home, had a letter from King James, 25th August 1489, appointing him Warden of the East Marches for seven years.¹ His son Alexander, third Lord Home, is styled in a charter of 4th February 1509-10 Warden of the East and Middle Marches of Scotland over against England.² George, fourth Lord Home, brother of the last, had a commission from the Regent Arran as Warden of the East Marches, 17th August 1546.³ His son Alexander, fifth Lord Home, was appointed Warden of the East Marches, 19th April 1550,⁴ and of the East and Middle Marches, 21st October 1557.⁵ His son Alexander, sixth Lord and afterwards first Earl of Home, is designed Warden of the East Marches in 1582.⁶ So far the Lords of Home had a sort of hereditary connection with the wardenship. But about 1591 the office seems to have passed to their distant kinsman Sir Patrick Home of Polwarth,⁷ and he was probably the last holder, as there were no wardens after the Union of the Crowns in 1603, in which year the first Earl of Home was appointed Lieutenant-General of the Marches.⁸

From the standard being found in the repositories of Marchmont House, which was not, however, begun to be built till 1750, one would naturally suppose that it was made for the last-mentioned warden, Sir Patrick Home of Polwarth. But the whole appearance of the standard, style of the saltire, the outlines of the lion and the character of the lettering, all indicate an earlier origin. The form of lettering was that in use on memorial tablets and brasses in Scotland in the middle of the sixteenth century, and to that or an earlier period I should be inclined to assign the date of the flag.

¹ *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, ii., No. 1893.

² *Ibid.*, No. 3406.

³ *Twelfth Report, Hist. MSS. Comm.*, App. viii. 183.

⁴ *Reg. of the Privy Council*, i. 94.

⁵ *Twelfth Report, Hist. MSS. Comm.*, App. viii. 98.

⁶ *Reg. of the Privy Council*, iii. 501.

⁷ *Scots Peerage*, vi. 10.

⁸ *Reg. of the Privy Council*, vi. 833.

There are two possible theories as to its origin. It may have been found at Home Castle when it was bought about 1750 by the third Earl of Marchmont, or it may have been taken from there by Sir Patrick of Polwarth.

What indeed more likely than that Sir Patrick, knowing that his kinsmen had been so often wardens, thought, like a thrifty Scotsman, that it would be better to borrow their standard than to get a new one made for himself? And one can easily picture him at the door of Redbraes—his residence near to the then unbuilt Marchmont—with his foot in the stirrup, and the precious King's commission in the pocket of his doublet, ready to set forth on his forenoon's ride. He goes down the hill, splashes through the ford at Blackadder Water, and so on to Home Castle—recovered now from the heavy hammering it had got from the heavy guns of the Earl of Sussex in 1569,—there to present his petition for the standard which was in future to remain in possession of his family till the other day.