

II.

THE SEVEN SEALS OF LANARK. BY THOMAS REID, M.A.,
ARNOLD HOUSE, LANARK.

The ancient and royal burgh of Lanark in the course of its municipal existence, commencing with the reign of David I., has employed seven different seals. The earliest one extant belongs to the fourteenth century; the second and third have been assigned respectively to the fifteenth and sixteenth; the fourth to the seventeenth; both fifth and sixth to the eighteenth; whilst the last is the one now in current use.

The matrix of the first seal has been lost; the Town Clerk of Lanark, however, still retains in careful custody the matrices of the other six.

SEAL NO. 1.

This seal (fig. 1) is still preserved in the Record Office, Chancery Lane, London. It has been attached, along with other Scottish burgh seals, to the procuratory for the ransom of David II. in 1357. The wax has suffered a good deal from the corroding influence of time during its well-nigh six hundred years of existence. The border is much worn away; the legend has disappeared; but the two fishes and the double-headed eagle are still recognisable.



Fig. 1. Seal of the Burgh of Lanark, 1357.

This seal bears a general resemblance to that marked No. 2; but Mr Joseph Bain, F.S.A. Scot., and the late Mr Robert Ready of the Seal Department of the British Museum, some years ago, compared the one with the other and found important points of difference. Thus, the wings of the eagle in No. 1 are less pointed than those in No. 2, the neck not so thick, and the claws different, whilst the two fishes are

smaller. The legend, doubtless, was the same in both seals, to wit, "Sigillum Commune Burgi de Lanarck."

By letters patent issued by the Commissioners of Edinburgh the burghs appointed Adam Gilyot, Adam Fore, and nine others as proctors for the payment of the king's ransom. The grantors are stated to be aldermen, merchants, and burgesses. Those who represented Lanark were Andrew Ade or Adam and Andrew of Ponfret. The common seal of each burgh was appended at Edinburgh, 26th September 1357. The royal burghs associated with Lanark on this occasion were: Aberdeen, Inverkeithing, Crail, Cupar, St Andrews, Montrose, Stirling, Jedburgh, Haddington, Dumbarton, Rutherglen, Dunfermline, Peebles, Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee, and Linlithgow.

It may be added that the seals of these burghs are composed of light brown wax, are more or less broken, and, like the Lanark seal, gradually crumbling to decay.

It is now impossible to determine how long previous to 1357 this early Lanark seal was in use in authenticating burgh instruments.

SEAL NO. 2.

Seal No. 2 (fig. 2) (matrix preserved) is thus described in Laing's *Supplementary Catalogue of Scottish Seals* (published 1850-66): "An eagle displayed with two heads, not on a shield, between two lions rampant in the upper part; and two fishes (salmon?) in the lower part; the background ornamented with annulets. The legend round the border is 'Sigillum Commune Burgi de Lanarck.'"



Fig. 2. Seal of the Burgh of Lanark of early fifteenth-century date.

As regards the date of this second seal, Mr Ready is of opinion that the matrix is of early fifteenth-century make—say in the reign of James I., 1406-37.

Mr George Vere Irving, author of the historical portion of an account of the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, in a letter written in 1867 to the late Mr Thomas Shirley, writer,

Lanark, expressed the opinion that the bird in the second seal was representative not of an *eagle* but of a *falcon*. "Lanark," he says, "was in its origin a hunting seat of Alexander I. and our early Scottish kings, who

held considerable forest lands in the vicinity, extending from Mauldsley to Pettinain. My idea is that the Lanark seals represent a hunting establishment." In this opinion I do not find that he has been followed by any competent authority on Scottish seals. Edmonston, 1780; Lewis, 1846; Laing, 1850-66; Birch, 1895—all designate the bird as a double-headed eagle. Lord Bute, in his book on the *Seals of the Royal Burghs*, says emphatically: "The great two-headed bird is not a falcon. The falcon is a perfectly well-known heraldic charge, and there is a regular way of representing it, ornithologically correct and one-headed, though slightly conventionalised."

More favour has been shown to Mr Irving's assertion that the quadrupeds in the phlanges are *dogs*, not *lions*. Mr Joseph Bain makes hereanent the following remark in a letter dated 10th February 1891: "Mr Vere Irving's letter is very interesting, and the supposed lions have certainly dogs' collars on, though the tails are those of lions"; whilst Lord Bute says: "We are prepared to agree to a certain point with Mr Vere Irving; we grant that the lions are hounds, and have reference to the royal chase." In all other treatises on Scottish seals which I have consulted these figures are designated *lions*. It seems safe to compromise and say they are hounds as to their collars and lions as to their tails.

Some doubt has been cast upon the opinion that the two fishes are intended to represent salmon. Laing, as quoted above, puts a point of interrogation after the name. The Clyde at Lanark, he states, was never a salmon stream. When the river in olden times flowed in a clear, unpolluted current past the Broomielaw, salmon were wont to reach the Stonebyres Fall, situate about two miles down from Lanark, but no farther. This fact may give colour to the idea that these symbols represent *trout*, as being more in keeping with the piscatorial surroundings of the burgh.

As to the ring in the mouth of the so-called salmon, "I believe," to quote Mr Irving again, "the ring is neither more nor less than the loop by which a rude hook was fastened to the line, and indicates a right of fishing." "This also," he continues, "is the origin of the fishes in the Glasgow arms, and has no concern with St Kentigern and the frail Queen of Strathclyde." One may be permitted to wonder what the good people of St Mungo have to say of this opinion.

This seal is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter; the legend, "Sigillum Commune Burgi de Lanarck."

SEAL NO. 3.

The mould of this seal has been assigned by Mr Ready to the late sixteenth century, by Mr Birch to the following one. It has the same

displayed eagle, but the so-called lions and fishes are somewhat differently placed. The bird would appear to have a bell attached to its dexter claw. (I shall notice the emblem of the bell later on.) The diameter of this seal is only $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch, necessitating a crowding together of the emblems and so creating a confused assemblage of symbols. The legend surrounding the seal runs, "Sigillum Civitatis Lanarcae." "Civitatis" now takes the place of "Burgi" in the former seals. The latter word is of Low Latin origin, but found in all Teutonic dialects of Northern Europe. It enters largely into the nomenclature of place names—having the original signification of a fortified place. The substitution of *civitas* for *burgum* is due, no doubt, to the revival of learning of the sixteenth century, and may have been adopted under the influence of Buchanan and his school.

SEAL NO. 4.

On the 4th November 1657 the Town Council of Lanark passed the following resolution:—"The Baillies and Counsall appoynts the staine wecht to be made up with the remanent small wechts and put in the stanage and als the sealls of the burgh to be maid of new." In all probability Seal No. 4 was the result of this resolution. An extract of a deed of date 8th August 1672 has been found with this seal attached to it. It appears, however, that its use was not exclusive of former seals; for an extract of an Act dated 17th November 1631 is attested by a seal derived from the matrix of Seal No. 2. It is to be noted that in the present seal the lions or hounds, the salmon or trout, and the bell have all disappeared; and that the only emblem left is that of the displayed eagle. The background is occupied with a floral display of wavy sprigs and flowers; whilst the Scottish thistle appears on the border between the words Sigillum—Civitatis—Lanarcae. It has been supposed that the design and stamp are due to a foreign artist, probably French. This seal measures $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch across.

SEAL NO. 5.

Seal No. 5 (fig. 3) is of later date, and appears to be of the eighteenth century. Here the animals, fishes, and bell reappear. The eagle is common to all the burgh seals. Mr Vere Irving, as has been already noticed, was inclined to call the bird a falcon. The nature and size of the bell, however, which is here seen to be attached to the right foot of the bird, militates against this supposition. "The hawking bell," remarks Lord Bute, "is well known as a heraldic charge, and is represented exactly as actually used. The employment of these bells attached to the hawk's legs is to indicate the position of the bird, should it become lost to sight; and the object is to make it as small and light as possible so as not to hamper the bird's flight. It is accordingly a very small and thin bell,

about the size of a berry, having an open slit in it and containing a smaller metal ball which rattles about within. Now the bell of the eagle of Lanark is not tied to the leg, but held in the claw, and it is not the hawk's light bell, but a heavy bell of the ancient Keltic church type, the sole effect of fastening which to a hawk's leg would be to tether the bird to the ground." "It is exactly," he continues, "like the bell of St Kentigern, which appears in the arms of Glasgow, and we believe it to be that bell, imported from the arms of Glasgow into those of the capital town of the county in which Glasgow is situated, and of which it would not have been a violent metaphor to say that it actually stood within sound of the much venerated relic in question. It is perhaps worth observing that the image of the bell does not appear in the arms of Lanark until about the same time that the thing itself disappeared from the authentic records of Glasgow, where it is mentioned by Mr Macgeorge in his *Inquiry as to the Armorial Insignia of the City of Glasgow* as being used at least as late as 1661 by a bellman who went about the city to announce deaths. All trace of it has now disappeared. Is it possible that it was transferred to Lanark at some time subsequent to 1661?"

These concluding remarks of Lord Bute must have been written in absence of any knowledge of the fact that the bell makes its appearance in seal No. 3, one that must have been in use long previous to 1657, when its French successor was ordered "to be maid of new." The suggestion in the closing sentence, even making every allowance for imaginative commentary, is too fanciful to be entertained historically.

SEAL NO. 6.

On the 9th July 1814 the Town Council authorised a new seal to be engraven "to be used in room of the present which is too small." The seal here referred to as being "too small" measures about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inch across; the new one has a diameter of 2 inches. This is seal No. 6. It is thus described by Mr Laing in his *Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Scottish Seals*: "An eagle displayed with two heads placed heraldically on a shield: the two lions in chief being passant counter passant; and two fishes (salmon?) in the lower part; the bell pendent to the dexter claw by a string of the last. The legend is 'Sigillum Civitatis Lanarcae.'"



Fig. 3. Seal of the Burgh of Lanark of eighteenth-century date.

SEAL No. 7.

This seal has only lately been adopted by the Town Council, and its design is due to the initiative and excellent taste of Mr James Annan, the present Town Clerk.

It is thus described by Lord Bute: "An eagle with two heads displayed, holding in his dexter claw an ancient hand-bell; in the flanches two hounds paleways confronté, collared, and belled; in the two base points as many fish hauriant adorsed, that on the dexter in bend and that on the sinister in bend sinister, holding annulets in their mouths."

In all these seven seals, whatever symbols be changed or omitted, the eagle remains invariably present.

The question may be asked, How comes it that the ancient and royal burgh of Lanark and the town of Perth—to take at least two typical instances—have assumed the eagle, either single or double-headed, as heraldic emblems? Is there any reason resting on fact or fancy for the use of this symbol in a burgh coat of arms? The answer cannot be given with definite assurance of being absolutely correct. It would appear that the underlying idea in choosing the eagle for such ancient burghs as the two just mentioned is to give expression, heraldically, to the traditional belief that they owe their origin to a Roman foundation. One of the towns mentioned in Ptolemy's Geography, situated in the district now known as the Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, was Colania, which name, by some writers, in its midmost syllable has been associated with the first in Lanark. Be that as it may, this supposed origin, viz. that Lanark was founded by the Romans, seems to have given rise to the adoption of the imperial eagle, single or double, as emblematic of its original foundation by the legionaries of Rome.

Several Scottish burghs, not all ancient and royal, have emblazoned the eagle on their common seals. The following may be noticed:—Airdrie, which has assumed the double-headed eagle on its seal, derived from the coat of arms of the Aitchison family, on whose lands the town has been built; Dalbeattie, in Kirkcudbright, has as a design for its common seal a shield bearing the coat of arms of the old Earls of Nithsdale; Perth, on its supposed foundation by the Romans, has placed its heraldic shield on the breast of an eagle, sometimes represented with two heads; Tillicoultry, the shield of which is divided into four parts, one of which contains a spread eagle, adopted from the Wardlaw-Ramsay coat of arms, Colonel Ramsay being the proprietor of Tillicoultry Estate and superior of the burgh.

The Lanark seals in the course of their long history were used for other than purely municipal purposes. It was customary for the various

trades in the town to borrow the burgh seal with a view to its being employed to attest their own documents. The seal of cause, as it was called, was granted to the weaver craft in 1660; to the tailors the same year; and to the smiths in 1662. This lending of seals necessitated a periodic ingathering, as is recorded under date 8th August 1695:—"The Baillies and Council appoynts the hail seals to be brought in and laid in the charter chist; or if given out that they be marked. James Young merchant, depons he has non of the toun's sealls but one whilk he hes to deliver this efternoon."

The Town Clerk, Mr James Annan, says that there are several instances in the burgh of unauthorised use of the Lanark common seal. Thus the Gas Company of Lanark and the Trustees of the Templar Hall employed the burgh seal without the motto on their official documents; and further, that the seal of the County of Lanark, previous to the appointment of the County Council system, was similar to that of the Burgh of Lanark; and since then a design for the use of this body has been made up of a blending of the cognisance of the Houses of Hamilton and Douglas. The old gate at the Council Chambers had the split eagle engraven on it; and the police helmet bears the burgh emblem of the spread eagle.

There are seventeen royal burghs of Scotland that date back to the twelfth century. Of these—a list of which has previously been given under the seal of 1357—the following six have not recorded their seals in the Books of the Lord Lyon, viz. Dumfries, Haddington, Inverkeithing, St Andrews, Selkirk, and Lanark. It might well form a subject of consideration on the part of the present Town Council of Lanark to come to a voluntary resolution to have the present appropriate and beautiful coat of arms matriculated in the register of the Lyon Court. This would be a fitting sequel to Mr Annan's artistic skill in the choice and arrangement of the various heraldic emblems of the seventh seal of the ancient burgh.