I.

NOTE ON THREE METAL MATRICES OF SEALS (OF APPARENTLY THE 13TH CENTURY OR THEREBY) IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES, WHICH BEAR THE EMBLEM OF THE STAG-HEAD CABOSSED.

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The three seals to which this Note refers are interesting, apart from their antiquity, as representatives of a class in which the stag-head cabossed—their principal as well as common feature—is accompanied with a lesser figure of one kind or another between the stag's horns. The combinations produced appear, in consideration of the period of the seals, to raise the question whether they had meanings in themselves in all cases, as they had in some.

Fig. 1.
Seal of Ralph Westhouse.
(Side view.)

The first of the seals to be mentioned, the seal of Ralph Westhouse (N.M.45 in the Museum Catalogue), is also the largest of the three. It consists of a copper disc 1 inch in diameter and about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. It has a small projection on the back, behind the upper part of the device which is on its face, to serve as a handle, and, at the same time, a guide to ensure the right directing of the seal when an impression of it is to be made (fig. 1). The figure between the horns of the stag in this case seems to us to be meant for a *cross-crosslet fitchy*,

not standing on the stag's head, but on what might be called a small bar tapered at the ends above it.[1] Round the outer edge of the seal, between the usual concentric lines, is the legend: S' RAVDVLFI WASTEhVSE (fig. 2). The Minute of the gift of the seal to the Society does not add much to our information about it, save that at the time, the word which we now read "Wastehuse" was read "Wastebuse." It records, under date June 12, 1784, the gift by Lieutenant Symes of the Marines, of "No. 690. An ancient copper seal on which is a buck's head cabossed; inscription, S. Raudulfi Wastebuse." The late Henry Laing, followed by Dr Birch the compiler of the Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum, identified the word Wastehouse with Waterhouse (B.M. Cat. of Seals, No. 17209), but upon what authority neither of them says.

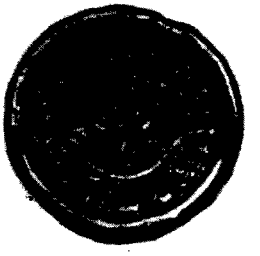
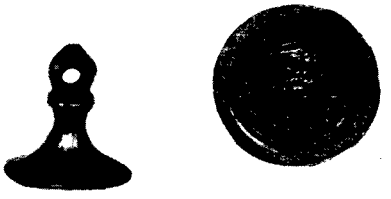


Fig. 2. Impression of Seal of Ralph Westhouse.

The second seal is shaped as a pendant, not dissimilar from the fob seal of a later age. It has a circular face, and its eight-sided shank which rises from its back tapers neck-like towards a small head which is perforated with an eyelet (fig. 3). The face of the seal is fractionally less than $\frac{11}{16}$ inch in diameter, and the height of the seal from its face to the end of the shank is fractionally above that measurement. The figure between the horns in this case is a rabbit, or perhaps a hare or a leveret in a crouching position, with its ears, which are very long, laid over its back (fig. 4). Round the whole, between two concentric circles of small dots, is the legend, S' NICOLAI DE GALWAY. The seal, which in the catalogue is N.M. 32, "from Dumfries, Treasure Trove, 1882," is of silver.

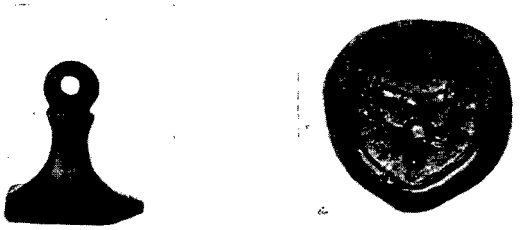


Figs. 3 and 4. Seal of Nicolas de Galway.

The last of the seals to be mentioned, because most lately discovered, was found at Epsom in 1924, in the garden of Mrs. Campbell-Brown, at Culbourne House. [At the date at which this notice of the seal was read to the Society, Mrs Brown had kindly sent it down for the Society's inspection, owing to the identity of its principal bearing with the *caber feidh* of Clan Mackenzie. She has since added to her kindness by

[1] Mr J. S. Richardson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, doubts the identification of the figure on the seal as a cross-crosslet, and he may be right; but our trouble is to think of anything that it is more likely to have been meant for.

presenting the seal to the Scottish National Museum of Antiquities, where it forms a valuable addition to the series of seals of its sort and date.][1] The seal is about $\frac{13}{16}$ inch from its face to the end of its shank—a shank which is similar in its style to that of the seal last mentioned. The face is of the unusual form of a shield, and is $\frac{12}{16}$ inch from the chief to the base of the shield by $\frac{10}{16}$ inch across (fig. 5). The metal is brass; and the seal, like the other two, has the appearance of a casting, not so fine in workmanship, perhaps, as the silver seal, but considerably finer than the copper. In this case, the device between the antlers consists of two right hands, the one grasping the other, placed fessways (fig. 6). The wrists are in close-fitting sleeves. In a panel, which might in heraldic



Figs. 5 and 6. Seal found at Epsom.

phraseology be called a *chief* from its position along the top of the shield, is a row of five rather rudely formed characters, some, at least, of which are Lombardic letters. They presumably compose a word, but what word has not yet been made out. Perhaps the accompanying photographic illustration may assist. All that can be said for the present is that the word appears to be at the most a motto and not the owner's name. On that account, the seal may be considered to have been meant for a counter-seal rather than a principal seal. And to that conclusion the shape of the seal to some extent assists: deviations from the customary round or oval shape for a seal were more frequent in counter-seals than in others.

The interest of these seals to us at the present moment lies in their bearings. But it should be said in passing, that I have not as yet identified any of the persons for whose use they were made. Waste-house occurs as a surname of considerable antiquity in England; but the arms borne by persons of the name which occur in the books have,

[1] We have also to thank Mr H. C. Alston, of 69 Cornhill, London, who has corresponded with us on behalf of Mrs Campbell-Brown in the matter.

so far as I have seen, nothing of the bearings of the seal in them. An English family of the name of Wastead, sometimes spelt Welstede, has borne a stag-head cabossed, but it is doubtful if the surname is a sufficient foundation for any conclusion of the existence of a common kindred.

"Nicolas de Galway" may be assumed, on account of the locality in which his seal was found, to stand for Nicolas *de Galloway*—the more modern form of the word which in earlier times was variously spelt Galway, Gauway, Galwaia, Galweitha, etc. He was probably a priest, taking his surname from the place at which he entered the church. In the next century the Archdeacon of Whithorn was *Magister Gilbertus de Galvidia* (*c.* A.D. 1322–1325, Gt. Seal Reg., vol. i. App. I., No. 22). The bearings on the seal have, of course, nothing to indicate any relationship to the ancient house of the lords of that territory.

In the absence of even a name in the case of the Epsom seal, its identification is most unlikely. Perhaps, as also with the other seals, the illustration of it in the Society's *Proceedings* may result in an identification of it; but, so far, no impression of any one of the three has been found attached to any document.

The question then, What are the meanings which lie in their bearings, and whether the separate devices, of which the stag-head is one, are to be considered as combined devices of which the stag's head is only a part? is left to theory and speculation, and probably in no case is to be determined as a thing of certainty.

The primary interest of a shield or a seal belonging to any much later date is genealogical, even though it may bear a possibly emblematic device on it, that device being there presumably to exhibit the wearer as the son of the man who had worn the same cognizance in the generation before. But when we get back to the first man of his race who wore a particular badge, the question is, Why did he select that badge? In an age when all the things of visible nature—and many things artificial too, for that part of it—were held to be emblems of things invisible, the question was not whether a man's chosen badge was an emblem of anything, but, what was it the emblem of? The question is, of course, easy to ask; yet what the answer is, we in our day, and being of our kind, may very often neither know nor be able to imagine. In cases, it may be, our search is for a meaning which was never meant to be apparent, because the man who chose the bearings was not concerned that everybody should divine exactly what they meant to him. In many cases also, the incentive to penetrate into his secret—if it was a secret—may not be itself apparent; but the stag-head, from its recurrences on many seals, both by itself and with other bearings between its horns,

prompts the questions, what did the stag-head when alone stand for? and what, if anything in addition, did the *composed* or compound devices, the stag-head with one or other of these other figures placed between its horns, signify? It is true that the widespread antlers of a stag's head which is face-front in its position might be thought to actually invite the insertion of something or other to fill the space left vacant between them. But it has never been considered in either ancient or modern heraldry to be necessary to fill that space; and in the times of which we are speaking, if a space on a seal or a shield was filled with anything, it was filled, we seem to be entitled to assume, with something which had a meaning.

In the year 1296 and thereby, the *Stag-head cabossed* is the sole bearing of such seals as that of Hugh de Fotheringham (Laing, ii. 376); but in most cases of that early date the head is found, as in the seals before us, with a figure of something else between its horns. Of these the cross with its varieties is the most common. The plain cross appears thus, in 1296, on the seal of John de Stuyse—there seems to be a doubt about the spelling of his name (*Homage Roll*; Laing, ii. 945) in 1296; while the cross-crosslet appears on the seal of Peter Aurgot (Laing, ii. 56), and the crucifix on the seal of William De Yethan (*Homage Roll*; Laing, ii. 996).

There is a probable explanation of the occurrence of the crucifix, namely, that it is a commemoration of the legendary apparition to Placidus, afterwards St Eustace, or the similar legend of the same apparition to St Hubert. The legend of Placidus is well known. One day, while he was still a pagan, he was hunting in the forest, and when pursuing a stag of extraordinary size the animal turned and faced him, and he perceived that between its horns was a great image of the Saviour hanging on the cross, "whence came a voice bidding him to follow life eternal." Placidus was immediately converted to Christianity. The legend of St Hubert narrates that though nominally a Christian he was a worldling, and that when hunting in the forest on a Good Friday he was confronted by a similar apparition, rebuked with severity, and at once converted from all his worldly pursuits. It should be added that St Hubert, who died in A.D. 727, was buried in the forest of the Ardennes. These legends, though neither of them as early as the saint whom it concerns, are both of them earlier than any of the seals which we are concerned with. Placidus of the first legend was a military commander under the Emperor Trajan; he therefore belonged to the first and second centuries. But the legend pertains, in the judgement of Baring-Gould, to the period—some centuries later—of the controversy with the Iconoclasts, when it was "probably composed for polemical purposes" (Baring-

Gould, *Lives of the Saints*; November, p. 73). It was originally written in Greek and may belong to the seventh century.

St Eustace was taken for a patron by hunters, but so also was St Hubert, and, if we may continue to follow the author just quoted, it was in order to account for that patronage of his "that the story of the miraculous conversion of St Eustace was foisted" into his history. It may be, however, that the attribution of the experience of St Eustace to St Hubert was due in part to ignorance, for there is no doubt that great confusion existed, and still exists in some respects, regarding these saints. As Baring-Gould himself points out, St Hubert is frequently called St Eustace; and actually, at York and Salisbury, he was entered, on his proper day, November 3rd, as St Eustace. If Mrs Jameson (*Sacred and Legendary Art*, ii. 794) is right that in the mediæval pictures of these saints St Eustace is always represented as an ancient Roman soldier, or armed as a knight, and St Hubert is dressed as a hunter, the famous picture by Albert Dürer, which is most frequently entitled the Conversion of St Eustace, ought to be called the Conversion of St Hubert. In any case, however, the stag-head with the crucifix between its horns as the device on a twelfth or thirteenth century seal is probably an allusion to the legend of one or other of these particular saints—St Eustace or St Hubert—rather than an emblem of any religious idea of a general sort.

It may be that the device of the simple cross between the horns of a stag was similarly derived from the legend of John de la Matha and Felix de Valois an anchorite at Cerfroid (*Cervum frigidum in territorio Maldensi*), that a stag having a cross of red and blue colours between its horns appeared to them on a day as they sat by a spring. That apparition is related to have been one of three successive intimations made to John that he should found the Order of Trinitarians (the Red Friars), and that the badge of the order should be a cross of the colours red and blue. The order was founded in 1198, and received a papal confirmation in 1246. The story of the cross of red and blue may be supposed to have been public property soon after the last-mentioned date.

It should be said in passing that the legend of the stag and St David of Scotland, though it pretends to relate to an occurrence of the year 1128, was presumably not invented till long after the date of the latest of the seals with which we are at present concerned. The question, therefore, whether the stag in that instance had a cross or a crucifix between its antlers—*i.e.* whether it belonged to the first or the second group—need not be discussed here.

So far as I am aware, no similar legends exist to explain the

conjunction of any particular figures, other than the cross or crucifix, with the stag-head.[1] In attempting, then, to arrive at any comprehension of such devices as those on the seal of Nicolas de Galway found at Dumfries, and the seal just found at Epsom, we are obliged to inquire at the very outset concerning the separate symbolisms of the several figures which they contain, and may begin with that of the stag-head the common feature of them all. The problem of the presence of the stag-head on a seal of the thirteenth century is simpler than the problem of its presence on the seals of later times, when owing to a variety of circumstances—among them the existence of inherited badges—original moral and religious significations of badges were apt to be forgotten, badges were selected for all sorts of reasons, and secular legends were being invented to account for things the earlier sacred meanings of which had been lost or had lost their savour.[2]

There is no doubt that as early as the fourth century, and perhaps earlier, the stag had been adopted as a religious emblem. At first, if we may begin with the wall-paintings in the Catacombs of Rome, it was an emblem of the soul's thirst for God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God" (Ps. xlii. 1, 2). But according to the Physiologus of about the same date, if we may depend upon the Latin translation of it, of the end of the fifth century, the myth of the enmity between the hart and all serpents was already being formulated. The hart thus became at a very early date a symbol of our Lord Himself; and that symbolism was recognised generally in subsequent Bestiaries. "By the stag rightly we understand Jesus Christ," says Philip de Thaun about A.D. 1120 (Cahier, *Mélanges d'Archæologie*, iii. 266, 267; Philip de Thaun, *Bestiary*, Wright's edition, London, 1841, p. 86, note). The frequent occurrence of the stag-head on seals of the thirteenth century and thereabout appears, therefore, to be sufficiently accounted for; and this reading provides, also, an explanation of the association of the stag-head with the other figures which are placed between its horns, and which have symbolisms of their own. The rabbit—if it is a rabbit which appears on the seal of Nicolas of Galway—was, of course, an animal which was found in the Scriptures. The conies were a feeble folk, beholden for their safety to the rocks, among which they had the

[1] It is doubtful if the *cross-crosslet fitchy* should be considered separately from the plain *long cross*. The Holyrood cross is sometimes represented as the one and sometimes as the other.

[2] The stag-head cabossed was held by the heralds of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to represent a stag in the act of charging; but the Thanes of Cawdor and the Mackenzies of Kintail pretty certainly had borne their several devices centuries before the invention—possibly by Sir George Mackenzie of Tarbat—of the stag which charged King Robert the Bruce.

wisdom to dwell (Ps. civ. 18; Prov. xxx. 26). The hare, which was one of the beasts fabled to sleep with its eyes open, was an emblem of vigilance (Camerarius, *Symbolorum*, Cent. iv., lxxiii.). The seal of Mary of Arncapel, now Ardincaple (?) (a detached seal in the Record Office, London, which once very possibly belonged to a Homage Roll of 1296; Laing, ii. p. 49) bears a stag-head cabossed, between the horns of which are a dog and a fleur-de-lis. These being, respectively, accepted emblems of loyalty and purity, are presumably there with these meanings.

The device of the hands which appears in the Epsom seal belongs to another class, perhaps; but it too, whichever way we read it, has its symbolism. In French heraldry, it is known as *une Foi*,[1] and has the corresponding name in the heraldry of Italy, though it has no special name assigned to it in the heraldries of Great Britain. In the words of Conte Guelfo Guelfi, it is a symbol of sworn faith, unalterable friendship, mutual assistance, union, reconciliation, or the conclusion of a treaty of peace (*Vocabulario Araldico*, 1897, p. 109). Nisbet, writing in 1722, describes it similarly, but gives no Scottish example of it; the crest assigned to Nova Scotia, probably before 1625, but recorded in the present Lyon Register only between 1808 and 1810, is, however, a case in point. The motto which accompanies it is *Munst hæc et altera vincit*. Nisbet mentions, among other continental cases, a medal struck on the occasion of the union of the Swiss Cantons, which bore on it the Foi along with the words, *Unio Inseparabilis* (*System of Heraldry*, 2nd ed., i. 264). Papworth enumerates several English cases of the device with the hands in fess—the normal position for the device in heraldry—and in other positions: as in the arms of Purefoy, De la Foy, Altrue, etc. (*British Armorials*, p. 906).

While two hands grasping each other, as they do in the crest of Nova Scotia, are a symbol of mutual faith and trust, one hand grasping another which is passive is the symbol, rather, of the promise of a vassal tendered to his lord. The device on the Epsom seal seems to be of the latter kind; and it is noteworthy that the device is essentially the same in Rietstap's engraving of the arms of the French house of Crespy le Prince (*Armorial Général*, Pl. I., fig. 37). The verbal blason attached to the illustration terms the device, nevertheless, *une Foi*.

Here, then, are a considerable number and variety of objects or devices, each of them having a symbolism or an emblematic meaning natural to it in the circumstances, and each of them placed within, as it were, the environment of the antlers of the stag. If the line of

[1] The term *une Foi* was extended to a ring, at one time in fashion, which was made to appear as if it were a band of metal the ends of which, shaped like hands, grasped each other.—Cotgrave, *Dictionarie*, 1632, *s.v.* Foy.

thought which has here been pursued is right the seals are to be read according to the art of their period, as essays in Christian symbolism; the rabbit resting composedly, surrounded by the attires of the stag, may be taken as the symbol of acknowledgment of weakness, but trust in God as a refuge. The hare in the same position may be a reminder that it is the duty of the waiting servant to watch. The Epsom seal, in the same way, bears the symbol of a plighting of faith in presence of God; the undertaking made under that seal was thus certainly to be fulfilled, as a vow to the Lord.

Several thirteenth-century seals exist in which the figure between the horns is the armorial shield of the person whose seal it is. The earliest example of this which we have found is the seal used by John de Laundel, son of William de Laundel of Teviotdale, about the year 1224 (Laing, i. 479; Macdonald, 1544). It is followed, about 1296, by the seal of William de Balliol (Laing, ii. 76; Macdonald, 92),[1] and the counter-seal of Malcolm, Earl of Lennox (Laing, i. 485; Macdonald, 1596*a*).[2] According to the canon of interpretation which we have accepted, the device is a declaration or acknowledgment of entire devotion to the divine Lord.

If, again, this line of consideration can be followed thus far, the further question arises, whether the devices of the cross, the cross-crosslet, and the crucifix between the antlers do, indeed, owe nothing to the earlier idea of the symbolism of the stag. While the apostles and martyrs were distinguished in general, in representations of them, by their being accompanied by the instruments of their office or their suffering, and our Lord, when represented in the form of a man, was accompanied by some emblem of the cross, it is natural to speculate whether the cross between the horns of the stag was not originally an emblem of the Redeemer and nothing else, a thing by itself, and of immeasurably greater dignity than the commemoration of the miraculous arrest of any mere individual sinner, however celebrated a saint he in consequence became. Also that the cross was probably the earliest emblematic combination of which the stag-head formed a part.

[1] It is perhaps not permissible to reckon de Laundel and de Bailiol in this context as two distinct houses, seeing that the "toom tabard" appears as the coat of arms on the seals of both of them.

[2] Dr Birch (*Brit. Mus. Cat. of Seals*, 16467) suggests that the stag-head on the last-mentioned seal was introduced into it in reference to the erection by Royal Charter of a large tract of land in the earldom of Lennox into a free forest in 1272. The suggestion seems to assume ideas which were more in consonance with the heraldry of the fifteenth century than the thirteenth. In an earlier volume of the *British Museum Catalogue* Dr Birch records that the seal of the Joint Justiciars in Eyre of the English Forests *citra Trentham* in 1497 (seal No. 6792) bore a shield of the Justiciars' arms marshalled with each other paleways, placed between the attires of a stag-head cabossed. There the stag-head is clearly an allusion to the forests. The stag had lost its symbolism; but that it had done so two hundred years earlier would be difficult to maintain.