

13. TWO LATE 18TH-CENTURY BANNERS (PL. XXIII).

(a) The banner of the "Midlothian Brotherly Society" [LF 22] has been presented to the Museum by Robert Porteous, Esq., of Grangemouth. It has long been in the possession of his family, who have been farmers in Midlothian for many years.

It is of cream silk, 49·5 × 35·3 ins., and has embroidered on it "MIDLOTHIAN BROTHERLY SOCIETY CONSTITUTED, IN THE YEAR 1798" and two men shaking hands over the Society's money box, with its three keys, flanked by rose and thistle sprays knotted at the base. The inscription is mainly of black silk, in satin stitch. The solid, long and short stitch embroidery is worked with

brightly coloured silk threads; it is in good condition, but the background is not. The background is made from two pieces of cloth, of different widths, sewn together lengthways, the larger to the top. The top edge has a binding, 0·7 in. wide, of light-brown silk ribbon, the other edges being hemmed. There is no indication as to how the banner has been attached. The embroidery is not worked directly on to the present background, but applied to it. The original backing is a silk cloth, woven with black threads in one direction and white in the other, which is now not visible unless the embroidery threads are parted. To enable the figures to be seen on both sides, as on the original, the new backing has been cut away behind the embroidery, turned in to a narrow hem and sewn down to the edge of the embroidery. Only the figures, the box and random parts of the sprays have been so treated. Round the edges of the embroidery in many places there is a black, tar-like substance, which lies over the embroidery but not over the threads sewing it to the new backing. It is suggested that the original background was painted with this substance, *after* being embroidered. The two identical inscriptions, placed back to back, are worked on cream silk ribbons, 2·1 ins. broad. These ribbons were applied to the original flag, the material of which remains between them. There is no embroidery on the comma on the face, but it is painted in black, as were the letters. The words "THE YEAR" and the date "1798" are on the face only; they are in cream silk and have been taken from the original banner.

Both round hats with soft brims are brown in colour; the tail coat on the left is natural, with a pink tinge, while its waistcoat has a blue tinge; the breeches are yellow, the stockings natural, and the low-heeled shoes, with large buckles outlined with silvered wire, are brown, as is the ground on which they stand. The figure to the right has a brown coat, outlined in green, a red waistcoat, and the remainder as before.

A printed copy of *Articles and Agreement of the Mid-Lothian Brotherly Society as amended 1835* is in Register House.¹ This gives the Society's sixth code of laws, dated 1831, which consist of twenty-eight articles. Briefly the purpose of the Society was to make an allowance to members during sickness or infirmity and to pay death benefits; it was open to men "of every lawful trade or employment—under 36 and over 14" who were of good moral character and had been approved by the general meeting (which was to be held in the Old Schoolhouse, Morningside, near Edinburgh); the annual fees for the different ages and the scale of benefits are given—benefit was 5s. per week for the first three months—along with all the other conditions of membership and association laid down by the relevant Act of Parliament. The Society was constituted on 17th July 1797—not 1798 as on the banner.

Their Procession Day was the first Friday in July, at 12 noon, either walking or riding as appointed yearly; ". . . and there shall be a stand or stands of colours kept for that purpose [*i.e.* The Procession] and that said colours shall be rouped every year, and whatever they give, to be put into a fund for defraying the expenses of said procession." Whether it was possession of the colours, or the right to carry them was rouped for is not clear. The last document is dated 1852, and the Society must have dissolved some time between then and 1870, for the Registrar of Friendly Societies has no mention of it in his records which begin in the latter year.

The "Trinquennial Return"² gives details of the membership between 1846

¹ Rules and Regulations of Friendly and Building Societies, Box 1, bound volume.

² As above, Midlothian, No. 96.

and 1850. Unfortunately, the designation of all members is not given, but out of the seventy-odd listed (three of whom were original members) ten are ploughmen, five gardeners, four dairymen, three smiths, three labourers and two "Land Stewarts," and there is a tanner, a shoemaker, a shepherd, a servant and a spirit dealer. Assuming, as would seem likely, that this is the original banner of 1798, we may have here a valuable contemporary representation of how the Midlothian farm worker dressed. George Robertson has given a verbal description in the *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Midlothian* of 1795,¹ which appears to agree with it, but a further note of his, on the same page, says that while several Friendly Societies have been formed in the shire, their members are generally "mechanicks," for "ploughmen very seldom think of becoming members. They are indeed such a healthy vigorous race, that such a scheme would very seldom be in their favour, unless restricted to their own class." We are left to wonder if the composition of the Midlothian Brotherly Society in 1797 was mainly "mechanicks" or ploughmen. In any case the banner proves that the "lower orders" were already dress conscious at that time.

(b) The banner of the Incorporation of Shoemakers of Inverkeithing was recently acquired by that Burgh, and I am indebted to the Town Council for permission to publish this note on it, and to their Town Clerk, J. S. Richardson, Esq., M.A., LL.B., for his kind assistance.

The banner is 61 ins. long and 41 ins. broad, and is made from two widths, one above the other, of faded light-blue linen, patched in places, but in good condition. White cotton tapes are sewn to the top edge, which is backed with a 1.25 ins. wide strip of red serge, and the other sides have the remains of a 2.25 ins. deep-red woollen fringe. There is a similar fringe across the face, 8.75 ins. from the top. The devices on the face are cut out and sewn to the linen; the inscription "SUCCESS TO THE SHOE MAKERS OF INVERKEITHING," is painted in yellow on a 3-in. deep strip of blue cotton. The emblem of the craft, the crowned shoemaker's rounding knife, occupies the space within the inscription. The knife handle is of yellow silk, the blade of blue outlined in white; the crown is on a light-brown silk base (which may be a replacement), while the remainder is embroidered directly on to the linen in brown, fawn, red and pink wool. The flower below is similarly embroidered. In the lower part of the banner four shoes and a top boot emphasise the craft to which it belongs. The boot is of brown cotton with a yellow silk turned-down top; the side and back tabs for pulling on are shown. The two lady's shoes are of black (left) and pale green (right) silk, with cream silk heels and black tips. The men's shoes are both of drab brown cotton, outlined in blue braid.

There is no inscription on the reverse; the emblem is as before, but the yellow silk crown is not embroidered and there is no base. The reverse of the lady's black shoe is blue, while the other is pale green with a light-brown toe. Above are two more pairs of ladies shoes; the upper pair are of cream silk, but the middle pair have toes of multi-coloured floral, brocaded, cream satin, partly outlined in pink braid.

According to C. W. and P. Cunningham's *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*² the top boots are of French type and the blunt-toed men's shoes are not earlier than the late 1780s.³ The ladies shoes are more difficult to date since their general shape and heels suggest the type worn until the 1780s, but they resemble slippers in that no fastenings are shown. From the evidence of the boots and shoes it seems unlikely that the banner could have been made

¹ P. 167 n.

² P. 230, fig. 81f.

³ *Ibid.*, 228.

earlier than 1790, but it cannot be very much later than that date. The shoemakers were at that time one of the five Incorporated Trades of Inverkeithing, having representation on the Burgh Council. A search in the burgh records would probably produce references to processions of the Trades in which it would be carried.

I am indebted for kind assistance to the Registrar of Friendly Societies and to colleagues in the Register House; also to Miss A. S. Henshall for the actual examination of the banners.

STUART MAXWELL.



Banners of the Incorporation of Shoemakers of Inverkeithing and of the Midlothian Brotherly Society.

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