

7. A BULLA FROM PERTH.

In February 1959 a 15th-century Bulla was picked up by a ploughman, Mr Robert Millar, whilst working on East Mid Lamberkin farm, about 3 miles W. of Perth. The field where it was found lies to the NW. of the farm buildings, on the north side of the Perth to Glasgow road. (Nat. Grid ref. 37/074229). A bulla is the seal which was attached to a document issued under the authority of the Pope—later the word was applied to the documents themselves which came to be known as Papal Bulls. The Bulla has now been presented to Perth Museum.

The bulla found is of lead 0.5 cms. thick. It is roughly circular, with a hole running lengthwise through the diameter, by means of which it would be attached to the document. At its broadest, the lateral diameter, it measures 3.8 cm., while the longitudinal diameter (through which the hole runs) measures 3.1 cm. On the one side in raised lettering is the inscription NICOLAVS P P V—that is to say, Nicolas Pater Patriæ the Fifth, who was Pope from 1447 to 1455. On the other side can be seen the letters S P A S P with a final E now obliterated—abbreviations for Saint Paul and Saint Peter. Below the lettering, in relief, are two heads, full face and separated by borders of raised dots, presumably representing the two Saints, Paul and Peter.

Although, of course, there is no indication as to the document of which this bulla was the seal, it is known that Pope Nicholas the Fifth granted an indult to the diocese of St Andrews in 1450, sanctioning the use of butter and milk-foods in Lent and on fasting days when meat was forbidden, as olive oil was so costly and difficult to procure. In 1451 Pope Nicholas the Fifth also granted an indult to the diocese of Aberdeen sanctioning salmon-fishing on Sundays and festivals during the five months when salmon were most plentiful, on condition that the first salmon caught should be given to one of the neighbouring churches.

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