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WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XLII.

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I may here add that I have recently learnt of the existence of a tinder-box in the Home for Poor Travellers at Rochester, the house celebrated by Dickens: but in that example there was an absence of all attempt at decoration, though I am told that it is similar in design. I regret that I have been unable to obtain a photograph of it in time to exhibit it at this meeting.

I am indebted to Mr Albert Hartshorne, of Shepton Mallet, for assistance in the preparation of this note.

The Rev. H. P. STOKES, LL.D., pointed out the scandal of attaching the name of Shakespeare to such forgeries.

Mr W. B. REDFERN mentioned that he had heard the box alluded to by those who had known Mr Dimmock, and that Mr Dimmock had been in the habit of putting it to a practical use. Mr Redfern also drew attention to a similar tinder-box bearing the date 1761 in the collection of Mr R. T. Mole of Edgbaston, Birmingham, a drawing of which appeared in the *Cambridge Graphic* of 27 October, 1900, page 5.

Mr T. D. ATKINSON made the following communication:

THE SEALS OF THE COMMONALTY AND OF
THE MAYOR OF CAMBRIDGE.

After the great riot of 1381, certain chosen representatives of the Town appeared before Parliament in the enquiry as to the tumult. On being asked if they had authority under the common seal of the town, they replied in the negative, saying that the town had no common seal¹.

For nearly half a century after this the town had not a common seal. But on the Thursday after the Nativity of the Virgin [the 8th of September], 1423, that is, quite early in the

¹ Cooper, *Annals*, i. 123 (1381). MS. Cole, xii, 128 b.

reign of King Henry VI, the Four-and-Twenty made the following ordinance:

That there should be a common seal ordained, which should be kept in the treasury under the keys of the mayor and aldermen; and that all leases of houses, and all matters touching the commonalty, should be sealed therewith. And that the seal of the office of mayor should remain in the custody of the mayor for the term of his office¹.

The seal affixed to a deed dated 29th September, 1434, is $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter, and represents an embattled bridge of four complete and two incomplete arches, and thereon, an escutcheon of France modern and England quarterly, supported by two angels kneeling. The legend is: S. COMUNITATIS VILLE CANTEBRIGE² (Pl. VIII., 1; and fig. 1).



Fig. 1. FIRST COMMON SEAL OF CAMBRIDGE, MADE 1423. CONJECTURAL RESTORATION.

The matrix of this seal is still preserved in the Town Clerk's Office (Pl. VII.). It is of bronze or some similar metal, gilded, and of admirable design. It has been mutilated, but the mutilations are not without interest, for they were done officially when, at some later time, probably in 1575, a new seal was obtained. I have attempted restorations of this and of two other seals. These restorations, I may explain, are not quite so conjectural as might at first appear; they have been made from an examination of the originals from which, with the aid of a magnifying glass, almost all the details can be made out³.

¹ Cooper, *Annals*, i. 171 (1423).

² Cooper, *Annals*, i. 171. British Museum, sulphur cast, lx. 5.

³ Plate VIII., Nos. 1, 2, 3 are from photographs of casts of old impressions, and in the three processes some of the detail has inevitably been lost. Fig. 1, for the loan of which I am indebted to Messrs Macmillan and Bowes, was made before I knew of the existence of the matrix reproduced on Plate VII. from which the reader will be able to correct some details. Plate VIII., No. 4 is from a cast of the matrix.



1. MATRIX. 2. IMPRESSION. 3. SIDE VIEW OF SEAL.
FIRST COMMON SEAL OF CAMBRIDGE. MADE IN 1423.



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. FIRST COMMON SEAL, MADE IN 1423.

2. MAYOR'S SEAL, IN USE IN 1352.

3. MAYOR'S SEAL, IN USE IN 1471.

4. COMMON SEAL, MADE IN 1575,
STILL IN USE.

CAMBRIDGE SEALS.

The face of the seal is circular but the handle is hexagonal; it is trumpet-shaped, and probably terminated in a ring originally, but the end is broken off. Almost the whole of the rim is missing, only one-eighth of an inch of the circumference being preserved. This small fragment of the rim happens to be at the head of the seal and bears a small star which marked the head so that when the seal was being used it could be seen that the device was quite vertical (fig. 2).

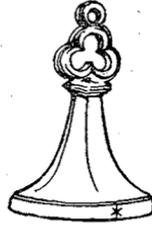


Fig. 2. SEAL OF 1423. CONJECTURAL RESTORATION.

This seal probably continued in use till 1575, when Robert Cooke, Clarendieux, granted to the town the coat of arms which appears on the seal now in use (Pl. VIII., 4). The grant is as follows:

TO ALL AND SINGULAR..... whereas, the most noble Prince of famous memory, King Henry the First, son of William Conqueror, did, by his letters patent, incorporate the town and borough of Cambridge with sundry liberties, whereby they are to use about their necessary affairs, one common seal of arms, as all other corporations do; since, which time they have not only used in the same seal the portraiture of a bridge, but also made show thereof in colours, being no perfect arms, in such place and time, as by the magistrates of the said town and borough was thought most meet and convenient. And forasmuch as usually all incorporate towns do bear arms, I have.....not only set forth that their ancient common seal is a true and perfect arms, but also augmented and annexed unto the same arms, a crest and supporters, due and lawful to be borne, in manner and form following, that is to say, Gules a bridge, in chief a flower de luce gold between two roses silver, on a point wave three boats sable; and to the crest, upon the hearme on a wreath gold and gules, on a mount vert a bridge silver. Mantled gules doubled silver. The arms supported by two Neptune's horses, the upper part gules, the nether part proper, finned gold, as more plainly appears depicted in the margin.....the seventh day of June, Anno Domini, 1575¹.

Among the payments made by the Borough Treasurers in 1575, we find:

Item, to y^e Herault for grauntinge & settinge out y^e townes armes & patent thereof, v^{li}.²

¹ Grant of Arms preserved in the Town Clerk's Office. See also Cooper, *Annals*, ii. 330 (1575).

² Cooper, *Annals*, ii. 332 (Accounts of Town Treasurers 16 and 17 Eliz.).

The seal bears the legend: SIGILLUM COMMUNITATIS VILLÆ CANTABRIGIÆ. The composition is very inferior to the earlier designs. Moreover crests are generally considered to be inappropriate to corporate bodies and were not given to them till the sixteenth century. This particular crest, a bridge on a hill, is especially absurd. It will be noticed that the earlier seals are not coats of arms, but devices of which the Royal Arms, those of the grantor, form a part.

On the 25th of May 1736 "the Right Honble Edward Earl of Oxford & Mortimer, Lord High Steward of this Corporation made a present to the sd. Corporation of a New Seal when the Old Seal was taken out of the Chest & broke into peices¹."

Although, as we have seen, the corporate body had no common seal till 1423, there had been for a long time past a seal belonging to the office of Mayor. This is indicated by the wording of the ordinance of 1423, quoted above, ordering a common seal. The ordinance also shews that the Mayor's seal was to be continued after the common seal had come into use. Affairs of minor importance were to be sealed, and are still sealed, with the Mayor's seal.

William Cole mentions² a seal bearing the arms of France and England on a deed of 1351, but he does not state whether it is the common seal or that of the Mayoralty. From the fact that it was used in the reign of King Edward III before his conquest of France, and yet bears the arms of France, Cole concludes that the seal is earlier than the reign of Edward III. But Edward adopted the *fleurdelis* in 1340.

The earliest example known to me of an official seal of the Mayor of Cambridge is one attached to a document dated 1352. In that year the Alderman and brethren of the Gild of Corpus Christi executed a deed appointing John Hardy curator of their estates, and in the deed³ they request William Horwood, Mayor, to seal it with his official seal⁴ because it was better

¹ Corp. Common Day Book, 25 May, 1736.

² MS. Cole, xii. 128 b.

³ Deed preserved in Corpus Christi College Muniment Room: 31. 85. See also Cooper, *Annals*, i. 100 (1349), and MS. Cole, xii. 127 b.

⁴ "le seal de sonn mairealtee."

known than their own¹. The seal affixed in compliance with this request is an inch and a half in diameter and is inscribed S[IG]ILLUM MAJORITATIS VILLE C[ANTEBRIGIE] (Pl. VIII., 2; and fig. 3). The device is an embattled bridge of four round arches, over a river. In the middle of the bridge is a gateway tower surmounted by an object which might be a crocketed spire. On either side of the tower is a shield bearing the lions of England, and supported by a lion. This seal is an excellent piece of work. Not perhaps quite so beautiful in design as the common seal of 1423, it is nevertheless full of good crisp drawing and minute detail. The strange-looking cusps in the arches are, I believe, a rude attempt at perspective.

In 1471 the Mayor used a seal with a device slightly different from that of 1352 (Pl. VIII., 3; and fig. 4). A dispute had arisen between Corpus Christi College and William Godfrey, a burgess, respecting a piece of land in St Mary's Parish. The matter was referred to John Connyngesburgh, clerk, Doctor of Law, President of the University, and John Croft, Mayor. They made their award on the 15th of November, 1471, and to it affixed their seals². That of the Mayor is circular and is about the same size as the earlier seal and bears the legend SIGILLU. MAJORITATIS VILLE [CAN]T. The device consists of a



Fig. 3. MAYOR'S SEAL IN USE IN 1352. CONJECTURAL RESTORATION.



Fig. 4. MAYOR'S SEAL IN USE IN 1471. CONJECTURAL RESTORATION.

¹ "Donec a Cantebriegie le demayn de l' annūciacion de fire Dame l' ann de fire Seign le Roy Edward tierce apres la Conquest vijnt & sisme."

² have sette our Seeles of our Offices aforesaid the xv day of november thelevnth year of the reigne of Kyng Edward the fourth.

escutcheon of France ancient and England quarterly supported by two lions¹. The design is bald and uninteresting. The level bridge is ugly and in strong contrast with the bold rise of those in the earlier seals, the arches are four-centred and poor, and there is a general lack of detail. The use of France Ancient in heraldry at so late a date is remarkable.

In the seventeenth century² the Mayor used a seal bearing the present town arms, but without the helm, crest, or supporters. It was oval and measured $1\frac{5}{8}$ in. by $1\frac{7}{16}$ in., and on the border was the legend: SEAL OF THE MAYORALTY OF THE BOROUGH OF CAMBRIDGE. There is a slight leaf enrichment round the edge. The matrix is preserved in the Town Clerk's Office.

There is a seventeenth century variant³ of this seal, oval, and measuring $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. It has no legend nor the enrichment round the edge.

The seal at present used by the mayor is exactly like the last, bearing the town arms, without crest or supporters, legend or enriched border. It is an oval measuring $1\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. and has a neat turned wood handle. It was probably made early in the eighteenth century or in the latter part of the seventeenth century⁴.

I have to express my thanks to Mr Alderman Kett, Mayor, to Mr H. M. Taylor, M.A., late Mayor, and to the Town Clerk, for shewing me the seals in their possession and for allowing me to reproduce them; and also to the Master and to the Bursar of Corpus Christi College for the same kindness.

¹ Award preserved in Corpus Christi College Muniment Room: 31. 13. See also MS. Cole, xii. 127 b, and Cooper, *Annals*, i. 219.

² Brit. Mus. Catalogue of Seals in MSS. Department, lx. 9; and sulphur cast.

³ Ibid. lx. 7.

⁴ It appears to be identical with No. lx. 8 in the Brit. Mus. Catalogue, attributed to the seventeenth century.

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