

III.—‘DAGGER-MONEY.’

An unfinished paper by the late W. H. D. LONGSTAFFE, formerly
a Vice-President of the Society.

[Read on the 25th February, 1903, by F. W. Dendy, V.P.]

Among the many tangled skeins and myths by which the chronology of Newcastle-on-Tyne is obscured, the subject of a payment of two hammered pieces of gold occurs.

In 1391, Richard II. conceded that the mayors of Newcastle might have a sword carried before them, and in 1400 that town was, by Henry IV.'s grant, to have a sheriff. It appears to be reasonable to assume that, whatever the obligations of the sheriff of Northumberland as to the king's justices might be, there was some fair arrangement as to their apportionment. In consequence of the severance of the earldoms of Cumberland and Northumberland from the crown of Scotland, a new state of matters as to the borders had arisen. Into the large question of border service, and the relative contributions of the northern counties, I cannot at present enter.

Suffice it to premise that Edward III.'s gold florin of 108 grains, current for 6s., of which only two specimens, both found in the Tyne or thereabouts, are known, was altered by him to the well-known noble of 6s. 8d., weighing at first nearly 137 grains. The weight, in

NOTE.—At the monthly meeting of the society in November, 1902, I called attention to the custom which prevails in Newcastle of presenting an old gold coin to each judge at each assize by the mayor of the city on behalf of its corporation. In my remarks, a summary of which appears in the *Proceedings*, vol. x., I commented upon the statement, which is periodically made by the mayor at the time of presentation, to the effect that the coin is a sum given to purchase a dagger to enable the judge to defend himself against the Scots on his journey from Newcastle to Carlisle, and I pointed out that there was no sufficient evidence of such an origin for the custom, and suggested that the coin was simply a present to the judge and a token of good-will. A few weeks after making these remarks, I found, whilst turning over the papers and manuscripts left by the late Mr. Longstaffe in his office at Gateshead, an unfinished paper by him on the same subject, and as my remarks had excited considerable local interest, and this paper so far as it went seemed to bear them out, I obtained the kind permission of Mr. Longstaffe's executors to read it to the society.—
[F. W. D.]

his own reign, was reduced to 120 grains, at which it stood until Henry IV., long after his charter to Newcastle, decreased the number of grains to 108, still current for 6s. 8d. until Edward IV. fixed their value at 8s. 4d. In his second issue he made much change. The old weight of 120 grains was coined for 10s., and 6s. 8d. was represented by a new coin called an angel or noble-angel, of 80 grains, which into the Pretender's time composed the celebrated touch-piece for the king's-evil. The 10s. noble was called a rial or rose-noble, and the rose and the sun (afterwards mistaken for a spur) of the house of York formed upon it a conspicuous badge. The reign of Henry VII. witnessed the introduction of a double-rial or sovereign current for 20s., but weighing nearly double as much as our present sovereign does. In Henry VIII.'s time the rose-noble of 120 grains rose to 11s. 3d., in Mary's that rial to 13s. 4d., in Elizabeth's to 15s. All the rials of 120 grains struck after the time of their founder, Edward IV., are extremely rare. In 1868, one of Elizabeth brought £30 10s.

The first published evidence relating to a payment by Newcastle to justices itinerant occurs in the corporation accounts of September, 1562:—'Paid to Mayster Mayre that was geven in *rewarde* to the Judges, 30s.' So far as the mere sum is concerned, the amount throws no light upon the question whether the 120 grains of gold were old or new coins, and the word 'reward' in these accounts is, when tested by contexts, found to be used in one of Halliwell's archaic senses '(1.) Regard; respect [A.V.]—(2.) To stand to one's reward, *i.e.*, to be dependent upon him, or his reward or countenance.—*North*.' The next entry is more instructive. In August, 1567, we have:—'Geven at Mr. Maiors comandement to the judges, two *olde* ryalls, for their *fee*, 30s. Item, geven to clarke of assis, in *rewarde*, 10s.' Why should the rials be old ones if they were for any present procuring of defence? A judge, as baron Alderson did, might well say:—'I doubt if these coins are altogether a legal tender at the present time.' There could be no difficulty in obtaining pieces which Elizabeth was striking. Halliwell again stands us in good stead:—'Fee—property; money; fee; an annual salary or reward [A.S.]' It is observable that even at this early period the mayor of the town and not the sheriff of its county deals with what

seems to have been only a voluntary present to the assize-holders. Still, whatever may have been its date of origin or motive, the practice had in 1595 become well established. In August was 'paid for 2 *old spurr* riolls geven to the Judges of the assizes *yairlie accus-tomde*; 15s. 6d. per peece, 31s.'

Before proceeding, it may be well to call attention to the common practice of presenting coins as pleasant tokens or remembrances. I have one which is engraved with the letters 'M.H.', referring to my great-grandmother. The instances in wills are innumerable. To take an example. In 1533, John Hedworth bequeaths to lady Hedworth two rials of gold, and to sir Thomas Tempest, *Mr. Robert Bowes, esq., John Lambton, esq. Robert Millot, Nicholas Tempest, Thomas Lawson, Richard Hedworth, and Jane and Elizabeth, his own daughters, to every one of them one rial of gold 'to a token.'* To sir Thomas Hylton and William Lawson, supervisors to the testator's executors, 'to give them good counsel, and help and defend them, that none may do them wrong, as far as they may,' he gives one rial of gold each. In 1553, Margery Tunstall gives to her son 40s., to his wife, her daughter, one angel of gold, and to their two sons, one angel each. To another son she gives one angel for a remembrance, to his son another angel; to John Lancaster another angel, to each of his children 6s. 8d., to another son (in law) one *old rial*, to his wife 6s. 8d., to his daughter 6s. 8d., and to two other females of the same name of Claxton, an angel each. To each of her supervisors, sons, she gives an angel. In 1556, Cuthbert Ellison gives to every one of his wife's daughters two rials in value. 20s., and to each of his supervisors in 'tokeninge' of his 'good will bearing towards them one rial in value of 10s.' One more instance shall suffice. In 1558, during the passing moments of Queen Mary, Robert Bennett, originally a monk and bursar of the dissolved priory of Durham, and then a prebendary of the new foundation, made a will in every way remarkable, and deserving of separate treatment. For my present purpose it is sufficient to deal with his bequests of gold. He leaves to Mrs. Chaytor, the heiress of Clervaux, 40d. in gold, meaning, evidently, the *angelet* of 3s. 4d., introduced by Edward IV. with the angel of 6s. 8d. With fluctuations reaching 4s. the *angelet* was once more 3s. 4d. for a short time. Bennett gives

to the lord suffragan bishop of Berwick one *old rial*. To each of two brothers Metcalfe, and four brother-prebendaries he gives an *old noble*; to another prebendary one *new rial*; and to Mr. Serjaunt Meynell one *old rial*.

The social position of the testators named above forbids all supposition that the coins given were to be anything more than keepsakes, but it is clear that those testators had to marshal their old and new nobles and angels, sometimes describing their respective values, as best they could. Some angelets are excessively rare. In 1864, Mary's rial fetched £63, her angelet £51.

Hitherto we have not found the slightest indication of any connection between the presentation of gold money and border service in kind, which might well be increased, but certainly not decreased before James I.'s accession. The burgesses of Newcastle gave largess in ancient coins, as did private individuals.

In 1627 we obtain a new and a peculiar class of evidence. It consists partly of an account in Latin of judge sir James Whitelocke for his circuit of summer, 1627, and another, in English, for two other circuits in Lent and summer.¹ It curiously happens that we also have the expenses of sir Thomas Swinburne, sheriff of Northumberland, during his 'sheriffwick' of the years 1628 and 1629.²

Among Whitelocke's receipts in respect of the summer circuit beginning at York, 16 July, 1627, we find the following items:—

	£	s.	d.
Of the prænatory of Lancaster	5	0	0
De Comite Darby	1	5	0
De Majore Eborac	2	4	0
De Episcopo Dunolm	12	0	0
De Villa Novo Castri	2	0	0
De Majore Novo Castri, (<i>spur royall</i>)	0	18	6
De Comite Cumbriae, Vicecomite Westmerland	17	0	0
De Vicecomite Northumberland	1	0	0
Item of the Sheriff of Carlisle a <i>dudgeon</i> ³ [boxwood] dagger.			

¹ 70 Camden Soc. publ., p. 106.

² Hodgson's *Northumberland*, part iii. vol. i. p. 358.

³ 'Turners and cutlers,' says Gerarde, 'do call boxwood "dudgeon."' Halliwell remarks that the root of box frequently provided handles for daggers. Hence dudgeon-hafted-daggers, dudgeon-daggers, or dudgeons, a term naturally sometimes confined to the handle. So Shakspeare:—

'Is this a *dagger* which I see before me

The handle toward my hand?

I see thee still,

And on thy *blade* and *dudgeon* gouts of blood.'

In Lent circuit 1628, the entertainments, etc., stood thus :—

Our charges at Doncaster, by the towne	0	0	0
Of the Maior of York	2	4	0
Munday dinner, the Maior of York	0	0	0
Sunday and Tuesday dinner, the Shirif of Yorkshire ...	0	0	0
The prenotarye at Lancaster	5	0	0
The Erl of Darbye	1	5	0
Our charges, horses and men, at Lancaster	0	0	0

The summer circuit adds the four northern counties :—

Our enterteynment at Doncaster	0	0	0
Of the Maior of York	2	4	0
Sunday and Tuesday dinner, of the Shire of Yorkshire [Mondays probably provided by the Lord Mayor as before]	0	0	0
Of the Bishop of Dunolm	12	0	0
Enterteynment by the Bishop at Darl[ington]	0	0	0
Enterteynment all the Assises at Dunolm	0	0	0
Of the Towne of Newcastle	2	0	0
Enterteynment of dyet by the Towne, during the assises, for the countyes of the Shire and the Towne	0	0	0
Of the <i>Shirif of Northumberland, at leave taking, in gold</i>	1	0	0
Of the <i>Maior of Newcastle, at leave taking, a spur royal in gold</i>	0	15	0
Of the <i>Shirif of Cumberland, all charges, and a dagger</i>	0	0	0
Of the Shirif of Westmerland, lodging, and for all charges	17	0	0
Of the Shirif of Lancaster, all charges during the Assise	0	0	0
Of the prenotarye of Lancaster	5	0	0
Of the Erl of Darby thear	1	5	0

The judges seem to have been franked at Doncaster, York, Carlisle, Durham and Newcastle. In the royal duchy of Lancaster of course they were. The bishop's £12 would therefore be a downright *donum*. The £17 from the hereditary sheriff of Westmoreland 'for all charges' may have been owing to his not being resident at Appleby castle, and in lieu of hospitality. He, however, provided lodging. The sittings at the little town on the Eden would be very brief. It elsewhere appears in Whitelocke's *Liber Famelicus* that 'the allowance of Justices of Assise in thear circuits, as it was proportioned at the first making thearof' was at the following rate :—

	£	s.	d.
' A . puisne { Dyet per diem	0	18	4
Judge { Men, ten, allowed eatche 16 <i>d.</i>	0	13	4
for his { Horses, thirteen, eatche 16 <i>d.</i>	0	17	
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Ad for the second Judge as mutche	2	9	0
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	4	18	0
For the Clerk of Assise, three Men, eatche 16 <i>d.</i>	0	4	0
For five horses for the Clerk of Assize, eatche 16 <i>d.</i>	0	6	8
Thear is allowed to bothe Judges for linnen and other necessaries	9	13	4
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This in all is for both Judges per diem	6	2	0
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This for Oxfordshire circuit for <i>twenty-eight</i> dayes, whiche was the olde allowance, came to	170	16	0
Out of this the Clerk of Assise had, for horse- meat for twenty eight dayes	9	6	8
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of ether Judge for every circuit	4	13	4
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Thear is an <i>addition of five dayes</i> to this circuit	30	10	0
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So the allowance is now	201	6	0
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To ether Judge	100	13	0
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The Clerk of Assize hathe but *his old* allowance for horsemeat.'

I have given this strange document in its entirety, only varying the typographical arrangement a little, in order to make it more clear. Was each circuit estimated as to probable time, and the judges paid upon it, irrespectively of the time actually employed? And, in consequence of the falling value of money, was the estimated time fictitiously increased? I am sorry for the poor clerk of assize, upon whom the pinch would come more severely than upon his masters. And I much wonder whether all the dones and free-keeping were duly set against the orthodox allowance. Furthermore, I much suspect that the judge sold his spur rials in those non-numismatic days, because he puts down varying sums for them, 18*s.* 6*d.* and 15*s.*, whereas he places cyphers against his entertainments, receiving meat and drink and lodgings, but no gold or silver. In clear professional profits, his income in 1627 was £974 10*s.* 10*d.*, for which, as money then went, he properly signs DEO GRATIAS.

It will have been observed that in both years a dagger was given to each judge, not by a sheriff of Northumberland or Newcastle, but

by the sheriff of Carlisle or Cumberland at the end of the journey, as I assume, unless we surmise that the western sheriff came to Newcastle to conduct, an improbable theory. I was at one time disposed to think that the service might be varied in accordance with the changeable judicial routes. But this cannot be, because it is plain that in both years in which the dagger was so rendered the judges were proceeding from east to west. I may as well at once put in sir Thomas Swinburne's own account as to the gold in 1628. 'Item, to the Judges, Sir Henry Yelverton and Sir James Whitlock, either of them a peece *att our parting upon Benwell hills*, 40s.'

It may also have been observed that in both years the contributories contented themselves with feeing the judges with the current coin of the realm, whereas the municipality of Newcastle troubled themselves with purchasing from the coin dealers of the day the old spur rials, 'not a legal tender.' I believe that, even now, a young freeman of Newcastle proffers some *old* silver penny or twopence on taking up his freedom.

Leaving the precious metal for the moment, let us compare the judge's account with what was actually done at Newcastle.

[NOTE.—Mr. Longstaffe's manuscript unfortunately ends at this point. I will only add that no mention of the custom appears in any of the histories of Newcastle published between 1736 and 1827, although in that interval exhaustive accounts of the town were written and published, viz. :—in 1736 by Bourne, in 1789 by Brand, in 1801 by an anonymous author reputed to be the rev. John Baillie, in 1812 by Hodgson, and in 1827 by Mackenzie. There is also no mention of the payment in the report of the examination into the affairs of the corporation in 1833 by Messrs. Dwarris and Rumbold.

In 1839, the late M. A. Richardson published from the Hornby MS. in the possession of the duke of Northumberland 'extracts from the municipal accounts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne extending from 1561 to 1688.' It is in this publication that the payments to the judges in 1562, 1567 and 1595, cited by Mr. Longstaffe, as well as another payment of 'two rose nobles' in 1659 not mentioned by him, appear.

The first mention of the custom in the nineteenth century is to be found in the third edition of Brockett's *Glossary of North Country Words*, published in 1846, where it appears under the heading of 'dagger money.'

It is probable that after the end of the seventeenth century the custom was for a long time discontinued, that after Richardson's account was published in 1839 it was revived, and that on its revival it received the picturesque name of dagger money for insufficient reasons. The corporation accounts subsequent to 1688 might, if investigated, throw some further light on the subject.—F. W. D.]