



4



1



5



6



2



7



3

SEALS OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

From photographs by Mr. C. H. Hunter Blair.

XI.—THE SEALS OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

By C. H. HUNTER BLAIR, M.A., F.S.A.

[Read on the 26 April, 1922.]

A. COMMON SEALS.

I. The first common seal¹ of Newcastle represents in a bold and effective style a castellated gateway. It is round in shape, the diameter being 52 mm. The masonry of the lower part is indicated by intersecting lines forming lozenges. The double door is closed and covered by similar, though finer, intersecting lines possibly indicating iron work. Above, at each side, is a single merlon with a saltire upon it probably again merely to represent masonry; in the middle rises a battlemented tower with three merlons and two embrasures. This central tower is shewn with a plain surface, suggesting by contrast with the lower part, that wood is intended to be represented. On its front, beneath the two embrasures, are two Norman long kite-shaped shields² with plain uncharged surfaces. The legend surrounding the central device is in a bold type of Roman capitals: it reads:—

✠ COMMVNE SIGILL' NOVICASTRI SVP'TINAM

This seal represents in a conventional manner, with that severity of design and feeling for proportion typical of twelfth century art, one of the early gates of the town which were possibly in existence as early as the time of William Rufus.³

¹ Illus. facing p. 171, no. 1.

² In later times the display of armorial shields above the gateways of towns and castles was common. The bars of the city of York are still so ornamented, whilst the northward front of the Newgate of Newcastle had three shields upon it. (*Proc. Newc. Antiq.* 3rd ser. i, 278). On castles in the north there are yet remaining examples on the gate towers of Alnwick, Bothal, Hilton and Lumley. (*Arch. Ael.*, 3rd ser. vi, 177, *et seq.*)

³ 'The Making of Newcastle,' by F. W. Dendy, p. 9 (Lit. and Phil. Lectures, 1921).

Though one hesitates to date this fine seal so early as the Red King's reign, it cannot be later and may well be earlier than the middle of the twelfth century. The form of the legend, its type with the early uncial G, the open E, and the archaic, reversed N, the kite-shaped shields, not found on seals after *circa* 1135, all tend to suggest the earlier date, but it is perhaps dangerous to press such evidence too far. It may be even rash to date it *circa* 1150, for that itself is no small claim because even then we should have in this seal the earliest known example of the seal of an English town.⁴

The earliest recorded impression of it is dated Michaelmas 1233,⁵ the earliest example of it now remaining is in the treasury of the dean and chapter of Durham to a deed of 1308⁶; the last record of its use is 28 July, 1643.⁷ After thus being in regular use for very nearly five hundred years it was lost 'at the tyme of the storminge of the Towne'⁸ on the 19th day of October, 1644.⁹

II. At a meeting of the Common Council held on the 9th day of April, 1645, it was ordered 'that Mr. Maior take care that forthwith a new seale be made in proportion and otherwise like unto the old one as neare as can be.'¹⁰ This order was not carried out satisfactorily, for, at a meeting of the Council held on the 30th day of May, 1645, it was reported that the new seal 'differs from the said old seale the Old Seale beinge engraved with one Castle and this newe one with Three Castles.' 'Nevertheless wee the Maior, Aldermen and Sheriffe and the rest of the Common Council . . . knoweinge the Three Castles are the Armes of the Corporacion and therefore are fit and proper for the Seal thereof, Do hereby Order and declare that the said Newe Seale engraved with Three Castles be from

⁴ *Proc. Soc. Antig. Lond.*, 2nd ser. xv, 435.

⁵ Madox, *Formulare Anglicanum*, p. 375.

⁶ Misc. Charter, 6873.

⁷ Newcastle Council Minute Book (Newcastle Record Series, I, 25).

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 39.

⁹ *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd ser. xxi, 221.

¹⁰ Newcastle Record Series, *op. cit.* p. 39.



henceforth reputed and taken to be the Common Seale of this Corporation.¹¹ This seal¹² is round and of the same diameter as its predecessor, namely 52 mm. It is armorial in motive, the charges being three castles, with three little turrets above each, surrounded by a legend, in small capitals, which reads :—

✠ COMMVNE SIGILL VILLA NOVICASTRI SVPER TINAM.

This legend is evidently formed upon that of the earlier seal, but the type of letter is poor and the design of the seal meagre and ugly in the extreme. It remained in use until 1731,¹³ when it was replaced by the third seal.

III. This seal is also round but much larger than the previous two, its diameter is 70 mm.¹⁴ It is of a very ornate armorial type depicting the full armorial achievement of the town, with crest, helm, mantling, supporters¹⁵ and motto all complete, in the prettiest style of eighteenth century seal engraving. The meretricious design is somewhat redeemed by the severity of the fine lettering of the legend ; the words of it again follow those on the first seal :

✠ COMMVNE · SIGILLVM · VILLE · NOVICASTRI · SVPER · TINAM

The motto,¹⁶ in smaller capitals, on a ribbon beneath the shield reads :—FORTITER . DEFENDIT . TRIVMPHANS

IV. The fourth and last common seal was engraved in 1882.¹⁷ It is a bad copy of the third seal from which, however, it differs in some details. It is slightly larger being 73 mm. in diameter. The mantling is not so well displayed, the small helm is of a type which

¹¹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 44. ¹² Illus. facing p. 171, no. 2.

¹³ *Ex. inform.* A. M. Oliver (town clerk).

¹⁴ Illus. facing p. 171, no. 3. Photograph from a cast in the British Museum.

¹⁵ Granted by William Flower, Norroy King of Arms, 16 Aug., 1575 (*Brand's History of Newcastle*, II, 183 ; *Foster's Visits. of Northumberland*, 2).

¹⁶ There is no record as to when this motto was adopted ; it was very probably after the Restoration in allusion to the brave defence of the town against the Scots in 1644. (See *Bourne's History of Newcastle*, 234).

¹⁷ *Ex. inform.* A. M. Oliver (town clerk).

never existed outside the office of the heraldic seal engraver whilst the crest and crest wreath are larger and quite out of proportion to the helm. The border of the legend is wider with larger and less well-formed letters ; in short, whilst the eighteenth century seal was at least pretty it is difficult to give even that dubious praise to its nineteenth century successor.

B. SEALS OF THE MAYORALTY.

V. The first known seal of this office is that *ad causas*. It is round in shape and 41 mm. in diameter.¹⁸ It depicts a battlemented bridge of two ogee-shaped arches spanning a river ; upon the bridge stands a gate tower. In its centre is an open doorway with pointed arch and raised portcullis, two of the spikes of this with a small portion of the grating can be seen inside the arch. On each side of this central gateway is a cross loop with rounded ends. Standing above the battlements are three lofty crenellated turrets, the middle one rising by the height of its parapet above its neighbours, in its centre is a quatrefoiled opening. The gable ends of the two pointed roofs of the lower tower are shewn between the middle turret and each of the side ones. In the field at each side of the tower is a splendidly lithe and virile leopard. The field of the seal is diapered with thin intersecting lines forming lozenges containing (I think, but they are not clear) small fleurs-de-lis. The legend is in a fine type of Lombardic ; it reads :—

✠S'MAIORAT' VILLE: NOVICAST' SVP'TINAM AD CAVSAS.

This seal was used for " causes " in the mayor's court and dates, in all probability, from about 1342. In February of that year the whole community of the town met in full gild and agreed upon articles ' regulating the government of the town, for the promotion of peace, goodwill and unity for the better maintenance of the law and for the advantage and betterment of the town ' ; they also

¹⁸ Illus. facing p. 171, no. 4.

agreed upon the procedure for the election of the mayor.¹⁹ It seems highly probable that this seal would be made then to mark the increased importance and standing of the mayor's court following upon the adoption of the articles. Its motive and style agree with this mid-fourteenth century date for it is a very beautiful example of the art of the seal engraver at that, probably its best, epoch. It symbolizes in one fine design the reasons for the great importance of the town in medieval times. The river, the bridge, the castle; the leopards of England denoting that this last was a royal stronghold kept always in the king's hands. The earliest impression I know of it is to a deed of 1369,²⁰ the latest to a document of 1596 in the Public Library, but though I have not found a later impression than this, I think that in all probability it would be in use till 1644 when, like the first common seal,²¹ it would be either lost or destroyed in the confusion following the capture of the town.

VI. The next, a most interesting seal, is one that I find a difficulty in placing in its right class, it is an 'ad causas' seal, but for what reason it was made it is impossible to say. It is used as counter-seal to that of the mayoralty 'ad causas' (no. V) attached to a document of 17 March, 1569, the only known example of this hitherto unrecorded seal.²² It is a small circular seal 20 mm. in diameter; its motive a walled town set upon a rock. In the centre of the design is a gate tower with heavy overhanging battlements, a steeply pitched, hipped and tiled roof rises above them, with a flagstaff at each gable, from which floats a small flag, or pennon, with forked tail. A crenellated wall masoned in squares proceeds from each side of this central gate; the part on the left

¹⁹ *The Mayoralty of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, by A. M. Oliver, p. 12; Brand *op. cit.* II, 155.

²⁰ Treasury of dean and chapter of Durham; Misc. Chart., 6882. ²¹ *Ante* p. 172.

²² The thanks of the Society are due to our member, Mr. W. W. Gibson, whose searches amongst the documents in the possession of his firm have resulted in this discovery.

ends, apparently, at a smaller gate with two circular towers at each side, with a roof similar to the larger central one and with like pennons flying above it. On the right the line of the wall is broken by a round tower with battlements and a circular pointed roof. The town is indicated inside the walls by two churches with square towers and high steeples and a hall or dwelling-house with a steeply pitched roof.²³ The legend is in a small type of Roman capitals with little crosses for stops; it is unfortunately incomplete, one important word being illegible, it reads:—

SIGILLV. AD. CAVSAS. LRA. . . . NOVICASTRI. . . .

From the type of the letters and general style of the seal it may, I think, be dated about the years 1495—1500.

VII. The second seal of the mayoralty²⁴ is round, 48 mm. in diameter and armorial in motive, shewing three castles on a shield with a slightly curved top and an ogee curve in base, the castles have three merlons and too embrasures on each, but no turrets, the shield is supported on each side by a rampant leopard standing on an uninscribed riband. Above the shield are two scrolls with an object like a mace between them. The legend in Roman capitals reads:—

✠ SIGIL : MAIORALITAT' VILLE : NOVICASTR' SVP : TINA
I have not been able to find an original impression of this seal the illustration being taken from a cast in the British Museum.²⁵ It is, I think, later in date than the second common seal (A.D. 1645) dating probably towards the end of the seventeenth century.²⁶ The

²³ Illus. facing p. 171, no. 5.

²⁴ Illus. facing p. 171, no. 6.

²⁵ British Museum Catalogue, no. 5198.

²⁶ 22nd June, 1699, 'Seal of the mayoralty ordered that all the aldermen . . . do consult Sir Robert Shafto and examine into the matter concerning the said seal and to whom the custody and using thereof belongs and to report . . . ' 27 September, 1699, reported that they had examined 'the matter concerning the said seal of the mayoralty and doe find the custody and usage of the said seale belongs to the Towne Clerk of Newcastle. . . . The said report is confirmed and it is ordered that Mr. Towne Clerke enjoy the same accordingly' (Extract from Common Council Books, Brand's MS. collections relating to Newcastle, vol. 1).

supporters are difficult to account for as the grant of the sea horse supporters was made at least a century earlier (A.D. 1575), probably they are reminiscent of the leopards on the earlier mayoralty seal, but they are as inferior to those fierce lithe beasts as the seal is inferior in all ways to its beautiful predecessor.

VIII. It was replaced *circa* 1731 by one²⁷ whose design, except for size and one or two minor details, is the same as the third common seal of this date. It is 50 mm. in diameter; the chief differences are that the riband beneath the shield does not bear the motto, and the standard borne by the lion on the crest has not the cross of St. George upon it. The legend in a good type of capitals reads:—

✠ SIGILLVM . MAIORALITATIS . VILLE . NOVICASTRI .
SVPER . TINAM

It is a pretty seal, well engraved, but lacking in proportion and beauty of design.

IX. It was superseded in A.D. 1902 by an inferior copy with an altered legend whose type sadly lacks the severe dignity of that on the eighteenth century seal; it reads:—

✠ SIGIL : MAIORATVS . NOVI . CASTRI . SVPER . TINAM
This is the seal in use at the present time and completes the list of the common and mayoralty seals of the town.

C. SEAL OF THE SHERIFF.

X. By a charter of Henry IV, A.D. 1400, the burgesses of the town were empowered to appoint their own sheriff, and a seal for the office appears to have been used. I have not been able to find an example of it, but one is roughly figured by Brand, vol. II, on plate facing page 142, no. 6. It is apparently of about fifteenth century date and depicts a triple towered castle placed within a trefoil. The legend reads:—

✠ S'OFF' VIC' NOVI CASTRI SVPER TINAM

²⁷ Illus. facing p. 171, no. 7.



5



6



4



7



3



2



1

STATUTE MERCHANT, STATUTE STAPLE AND SEALS OF INCORPORATED
COMPANIES OF NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

From photographs by C. H. Hunter Blair.

D. MISCELLANEOUS.

XI. There remain certain seals used for special purposes connected with the town and by the most important of the incorporated companies which, that this record may be complete, should be included in this list. The first of these in order of date is the seal of the Tyne bridge²⁸—*Sigillum pontis Tyne* which is mentioned from at least the early years of the thirteenth century, it was used by the *procuratores et custodes* of the bridge but unfortunately only the fact of its existence is known to us, neither description nor example of it having so far been found.

XII. Next comes the Statute Merchant seal²⁹ for the town dating from *circa* 1290. The obverse, king's seal or 'greater piece' is 42 mm. diameter. It depicts the crowned bust of Edward I, with a crouching leopard across his breast, flanked on each side by a castle with three towers. The legend, in fine Lombardics, reads:—

✠ S' EDW' REG' [ANG'AD RECOGN'] DEB'AP'D NOVI
[CASTRI SVP'] TIN'

The counterseal, clerk's seal or 'smaller piece'³⁰ is 20 mm. in diameter and represents a triple towered and masoned castle from which floats the flag of England as used by the early Plantagenets, the legend also in Lombardics, reads 'Novi Castr' S'rtin'.

XIII. When this seal ceased to be used is not known, but by the time of Elizabeth a new one³¹ was in being, 46 mm. in diameter and armorial in motive. The shield bears the arms of the town each of the castles having three little turrets above it. I am inclined to think that the engraver of the second common seal of

²⁸ *Liber Cartarum*, belonging to Newcastle Corporation, no. 72. *Ex inform*, A. M. Oliver (town clerk).

²⁹ Illus. facing p. 179, no. 1. The only known example of it is attached to a recognisance of 28 Sept., 1366, in the Treasury at Durham; 3-13 Specialia, no. 28. For detailed account of it see *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Newc.* 3rd ser. viii, 60.

³⁰ Illus. facing p. 179, no. 2.

³¹ Illus. facing p. 179, no. 4. From a poor impression in the British Museum.

the town in 1645, must have had this seal to copy, the similarity of the castles in each being very marked.

Above the shield is a royal crown with, on the dexter, the letter E crowned and on the sinister, the crowned letter R. In the field on the dexter of the shield is the crowned Tudor rose, on the sinister the crowned portcullis badge of the Beauforts. The legend is in a poor type of capitals and is incomplete; it reads:—

✠ SIGILL...MERCAT...NOV: CASTR: SVP. TINAM

XIV. The Statute Staple seal³² for the town was made in pursuance of the statute of 1353.³³ The motive has a general likeness to that of the first seal of the mayoralty which dates a few years earlier. It represents a river flowing in front of a broad castellated gateway with three battlemented turrets above, and between them the two pointed roofs of the tower. The gateway is defended by a portcullis with three spikes shewn partially raised, across it is a leopard of England, beyond the gate in the field at each side is a fleur-de-lis. Both badges are taken from the shield of Edward III. The legend is in a late type of Lombardic, its inner border ornamented by a series of small saltires, it reads:—

✠ SIGILLV ST[APVLE] VILLE: NOVI: CASTRISVP' TYNA'

XV. The Trinity House of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, by their charter granted 5 October, 1536,³⁴ were empowered to use a common seal, but if one was then made, no impression or record of it remains. Their earliest extant seal is, I think, the one made of silver at a cost of 2*l.* 7*s.* 9*d.* in 1645³⁵; it is, in all probability, a copy of the one which would be made after the grant of their new charter by James I, 18 Jan., 1606.³⁶ This earlier seal, like those of the town, probably perished when the house was plundered by the

³² Illus. facing p. 179, no. 3.

³³ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Newc.*, 3rd ser. viii, 60 *et seq.*

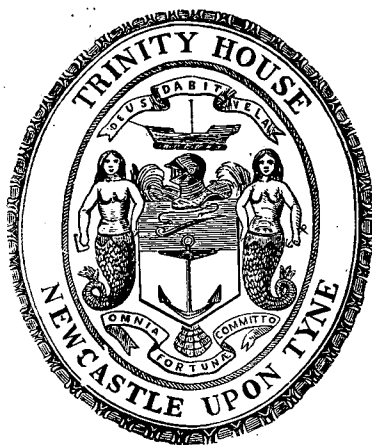
³⁴ Brand, *op. cit.* ii, 324.

³⁵ *Ibid.* ii, 324 and note p. 179.

³⁶ On 14 March, 1609, there is an order to continue the use of a seal with the same inscription on as is on that of 1645 (Brand, *op. cit.* ii, 324, note p.).

Scots in 1644.³⁷ No impression of it is known. The one made in 1645 is oval in shape measuring 55 by 45 *mm.*³⁸ The motive is armorial, the shield, which is of a shape admirably adapted to display the charge, bears a three-masted ship in full sail upon the sea. A flag with the cross of St. George upon it flies at each of the three mastheads. Above the shield is a visored helm from which the mantling flows, above and round the sides of the shield, in a very bold and decorative style. Above the helm, on a wreath, is the crest of a played eagle. The outer border of the legend is of finely carved small fleurs-de-lis, the inner border is beaded. The legend in small capitals, reads:—

* THIS . IS . THE . SEALE . OF . THE . TRINITY . HOVSE . IN NEW-
CASTLE . VPON . TYNE



XVI. About the middle of the eighteenth century this beautiful seal was discarded and a new one engraved. This also is oval measuring 57 by 47 *mm.*, it depicts the full armorial achievement of the Trinity House. I have reproduced it in the margin.³⁹ I leave it to speak for itself.⁴⁰

XVII. The Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne became a corporate body, with the right to have a common seal, by a charter granted

³⁷ *Ibid.* II, 329. ³⁸ Illus. facing p. 179, no. 5. From a cast in the British Museum.

³⁹ My thanks are due to the Master and Brethren of the Trinity House of Newcastle-upon-Tyne for permission to reproduce it here. Also to Mr. Haddon T. Henzell for his kindness and courtesy in helping me in my search for their earlier seals, though unfortunately the search was fruitless.

⁴⁰ For blason see Brand, *op. cit.* II, 330 and note n.

by Edward VI, in 1547⁴¹; in a succeeding charter, granted by Elizabeth in 1559, it is provided that they 'for ever shall have a common seale to seale all and singular charters and evidences and other writings or deeds.'⁴² No impression or description of a sixteenth century seal is known though one at least was made, for in 1555 ix. ijd. was paid to Peter Riddall 'for one seale that was maid beyonde the see for the behove of the fellyshipe.'⁴³ The seal at present in use cannot, I think, be earlier than the first quarter of the seventeenth century if indeed it is as early, though it is probably a copy of the earlier seal made in A.D. 1555. The silver matrix is still preserved with the records and books of the company.⁴⁴ It is a beautiful armorial seal well worthy of the dignity of this powerful company; its shape is round, its diameter 45 mm.⁴⁵ The shield is barry wavy of six [*silver* and *azure*] with a chief quarterly [*gules* and *gold*] on the first and fourth a leopard of England, on the second and third two roses [*gules*]. The wavy (O.F. *oundee*) bars represent the sea, the allusion is lost if it is blasoned, as it usually is, *barry nebuly*. The merchant adventurers went down to the sea in ships, the path of the eagle was not yet their highway. The chief is reminiscent of the shield of England, with the Tudor rose added, doubtless that the shield might be recognized in foreign parts as that of an English company.⁴⁶ The outer border of the legend is a finely engraved wreath of laurels, the inner is a smaller pattern of the same leaves; the legend, in a beautiful type of small capitals, reads:—

⁴¹ *Records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, ed. by F. W. Dendy (93 Surt. Soc. publ., p. xxxiii).

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 289.

⁴³ 101 Surt. Soc. publ., p. 165.

⁴⁴ My thanks are due to Mr. Collingwood Forster Jackson, for allowing me to inspect this seal matrix, to take an impression and for permission to reproduce it.

⁴⁵ Illus. facing p. 179, no. 6.

⁴⁶ The shield of arms is that used by the Merchant Adventurers of London. The legend of their seal reads:—REDDITE+CVIQB+QVOD+SVVM+EST (B.M. catalogue 14711).

✠ S' SOCIETATIS MERC' VENT' HABITAN' INFRA VILL' NOVI
CASTR' SVPER TINAM

This appears to have been known as 'the great seal' of the company.

XVIII. They also used a small seal, the silver matrix of which is likewise with the muniments of the company. It is round of 25 *mm.* diameter and a copy in miniature of the larger seal, the only difference being that it has no legend, the shield being surrounded only by a triple beaded border.

XIX. The Company of Hostmen of Newcastle-upon-Tyne was incorporated by a charter of Elizabeth granted in 1600,⁴⁷ but it appears to have used a common seal before this date as a grant to the crown, in return for this charter, was under their 'new' common seal⁴⁸; of this earlier seal no impression or record exists. Their present seal, the silver matrix of which yet remains with the archives of the company, is doubtless the one made in April, 1649, when £6 was paid for 'makinge the company's newe seale,'⁴⁹ it is in all likelihood a copy of one that would be made at the beginning of that century. It is round,⁵⁰ 54 *mm.* in diameter and of a very interesting design representing a portly and prosperous hostman clothed in a long fur-lined robe saluting, with raised hat and outstretched hand, his guest (host), who is in traveller's garb, with the words on a scroll WELCOME.MY.OSTE. Both host and guest stand on a tiled pavement. The outer border of the legend is finely carved in a pattern of conventional lilies with a small rose at the top centre, the inside border is a thin cable moulding. The legend is in small caps. with several of the letters conjoined. It reads:—

* THE . SEALE . OF . THE . FRETERNITY OF . THE . OSTMEN OF . THE .
TOWNE . OF . NEWCASTLE . VPON . TINE

⁴⁷ *Records of the Company of Hostmen of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, ed. F. W. Dendy (105 Surt. Soc. publ., p. 10, *et seq.*). Brand, *op. cit.* II, 270—273.

⁴⁸ Dendy, *op. cit.* p. XIII. ⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 248.

⁵⁰ Illus. facing p. 179, no. 7. From a cast in the British Museum.



XX. The silver matrix of the Admiralty Court of Newcastle-upon-Tyne⁵¹ is preserved in the Blackgate museum. It is circular,⁵² 40 mm. in diameter and apparently of early seventeenth century date. It shews a three-masted man-of-war with three guns shewing on the port side. Some of the sails are set and a square ensign charged with a cross paty flies at each mast head, from the bow-

sprit and at the stern. The sea is not represented. The legend, placed between an inner and an outer beaded border, is in small capitals, it reads :—

* SIGILL. CVR. ADMIRAL. VIL. NOVICAST. SVPER TINAM

⁵¹ Brand, *op. cit.* II, p. 17, *et seq.*

⁵² Illustrated in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Newc.* 3rd ser., VI, plate facing p. 78.