

SOME PILGRIMS' BADGES IN THE GUILDHALL MUSEUM

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THE peculiar character of the mediæval pilgrimage of the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries is not easily appreciated in modern times. In a period when travel was difficult and accommodation for travellers meagre, except at the guest-houses of the monasteries, these visits to the shrines of famous saints afforded almost the only opportunity for most people of leaving their native district and of meeting people whom they had not known all their life. The result was a holiday spirit of a kind that would now be rather associated with a Bank Holiday outing than with a journey for spiritual benefit.

This light-hearted spirit, however, did not detract from the religious significance of the pilgrimage, for no doubt the majority of the pilgrims were sincere and conscientious in their devotions. However, even amidst the religious atmosphere at the end of the pilgrimage, the holiday spirit was not forgotten. Among other things provided for the entertainment of the pilgrims was the provision of metal badges in the form of the saint or of one of his emblems, which would serve both as a memento and as an outward visible sign of a completed pilgrimage. The sale of these badges formed a useful source of revenue for the monasteries concerned.¹ Save that, so far as we know, the majority of these badges were intended for personal wear, there is a curious resemblance to the small objects of crested china which are offered for sale at most modern holiday resorts.

The badges are normally made of lead or pewter, but occasionally of a brass-like form of bronze. The earlier specimens all have a loop at the top² and were hung round the neck, but this was gradually superseded by a right-angled pin of the same metal intended for attaching to the hat. The pin fastening was never universal, the most notable exception probably being the series of Canterbury bells.

The two most popular objects of pilgrimage in England were the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury and Our Lady of Walsingham, and to these, particularly the former, a number of badges can be definitely ascribed. In a few cases the stone moulds, in which the badges were cast, are known, and in these

cases the badges can be ascribed to a religious house in the vicinity in which it was found, since the moulds themselves are objects of no value and are unlikely to have been carried far from the place where they were used. For the rest, it is a matter of probability rather than certainty. As an example of the many complications which arise, the pecten or scallop shell may be quoted. It is usual to classify all badges bearing this design to the Abbey of St. James of Compostella, but an ampulla, found many years ago at Dunwich, bears the scallop shell on one side, but on the other there is the crowned "W" badge of the Abbey of Walsingham. Many of these badges may be personal talismans, not connected with any pilgrimage. In this connection, the popularity a few years ago, even among non-Catholics, and especially among motorists, of medallions bearing a figure of St. Christopher should be remembered. Others, especially those bearing emblems, may well be secular badges connected with the Guilds, or even with the retainers of the great households. Examples which undoubtedly belong to the latter class are included in the Guildhall Museum Collections.

There is great variety in the symbolism used in these badges. Crucifixes are fairly common, but are probably mostly of a personal character, particularly among the religious orders, though some may be connected with pilgrimages to shrines such as the Rood of Grace at Boxley or to any of the great churches with dedications to Christ. The same may be said of the Nimbed Cross bearing five circles representing the Five Wounds of Christ. Of the figure type badges, much the most common in London, are those representing St. Thomas, followed by those of the Virgin and Child. Others, which occur in smaller numbers, are St. Leonard, sometimes standing on a named label; St. Erasmus, usually an open figure which may have been originally sealed to hold a small relic or holy water; a small crowned head on a pin, which may represent St. Edward the Confessor, St. Edmund, or even King Henry VI, whose tomb at Windsor was an object of pilgrimage, although he was never canonised. The emblems include a sword for St. Peter (possibly of Westminster), the scallop of St. James, the tau cross of St. Anthony; and the wool comb of St. Blaise. Another enigmatic group consists of single initials. The Guildhall collection contains badges consisting of the letters M (probably the Virgin Mary); A, crowned (St. Agnes? or St. Alban?);

K (St. Kenelm, King of Mercia?); P; and T, crowned (probably St. Thomas).

Of the badges figured in the plates, No. 1 is a bronze badge with a representation of the Virgin and Child enthroned, within a border of dots; No. 2 is a lozenge-shaped plate showing the Annunciation. This specimen is unusual in that instead of a pin it has a wire ring for attachment. No. 3 is an oblong pewter badge which shows traces of having been gilded. It depicts the Infant Christ, nimbed and covered with a richly decorated quilt. All three must have reference to a shrine of St. Mary, probably that at Walsingham.

The next example is also a badge of St. Mary (No. 4), but this time carrying the Child and standing on a crescent. The latter is stated to represent a boat and the badge is said to originate from the shrine of Our Lady of Boulogne. Boulogne, as the nearest Continental shrine, was always popular with English pilgrims and this type of badge in its many varieties is comparatively common in London. The peculiar form of this representation is accounted for by the legend of the miraculous arrival of the sacred image at Boulogne in a crewless ship.

No. 5 is a small pinned badge in the shape of a heart from which springs a three-branched flower. The probability is that this badge represents the shrine of St. Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury Abbey, in which case the flower would have reference to the legend of the Holy Thorn. The reputation of this shrine must have been widespread at this period from its connection with the Arthurian legends.

No. 6 is an openwork discoid case of pewter, containing the crushed remains of a single shell of the common cockle. As stated above, many of these shell reliquaries originate from St. James of Compostella, but it cannot be stated definitely that this is true in all cases.

The last five badges on Plate I are all of St. Thomas of Canterbury. No. 7 has a crude bust of the saint in an embossed sexafoil, while No. 8 has a better executed bust under a canopy in a rayant circle, inscribed + SANCTVS THOMAS. No. 9 is a circular disc with a six-pointed star-like design within a broad border inscribed SANCT THOMA O R P M. This specimen is unusual in that it has a catch for the pin. No. 10 is one of the series of Canterbury bells which is one of the commonest designs found in London. The specimen illustrated

is inscribed round the lower edge THOME + CAMPANA. It has a quatrefoil loop for suspension and beside it is a hole through which some form of clapper was formerly affixed. Finally, No. 11 is the glove of St. Thomas, a more unusual emblem of this saint.

The first badge on Plate II (No. 12) is the tau cross associated with St. Anthony. This cross is unusual in several ways. Unlike the majority of specimens of this form of cross it bears a representation of the Crucifixion. Also it has a brooch-type fastening, similar to No. 9, at the base there is a loop of unknown use but possibly for the suspension of a bell.

Nos. 13 and 14 are both said to be connected with St. Barbara. The bundle of rods refers to her ill-treatment in her father's house on account of her Christianity, *but I have been unable to trace the significance of the feather, and it may well be a civil badge.*

St. Erasmus, No. 15, is in the nature of an ampulla, as the body is tubular in form and probably contained a small relic or holy water. The badge is incomplete, as the body is now open at the bottom and only a portion remains of the windlass in the Saint's left hand to represent the instrument of his martyrdom.

The Wheel of St. Catherine, No. 16, is an unusual and perhaps unique piece of symbolism, in that it depicts an instrument which was not that of the martyrdom. According to the legend the wheel which had been prepared fell to pieces at her touch, and she was subsequently beheaded.

No. 17 is a damaged figure of St. Dorothy, who was martyred at Cappadocia during the Diocletian persecution. She is shown holding *one of the flowers which bloomed on her head-dress at the time of her execution, while others are in the basket she carries on her arm.*

No. 18 is the Hunting Horn, dedicated to St. Hubert. It belongs to another series of badges which were usually worn suspended by a loop formed from the strings of the horn and although now flattened was originally cast in the round. Again, the symbolism is unusual in depicting an object connected with the earlier period of his life before he turned to the church.

St. Leonard, No. 19, is one of the legendary saints. He is shown with fetters and episcopal staff and standing on a label inscribed S. LENNARD. Named badges, with the exception of the Canterbury series, are exceedingly rare.



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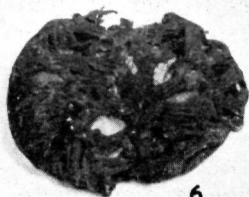
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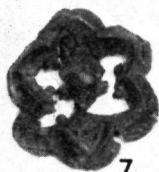
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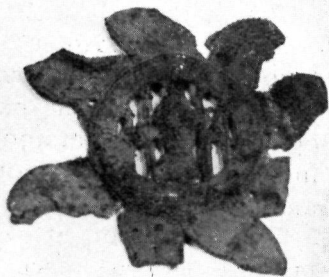
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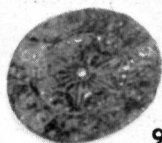
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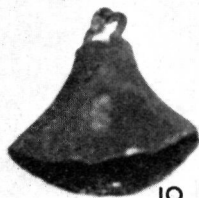
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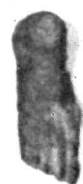
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Master John Schorn, No. 20, was a popular object of pilgrimage although, like King Henry VI, he was never canonised. He was Vicar of North Marston, in Buckinghamshire, where he died in 1340. About 1480 his remains were transferred to St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The story of how he confined the Devil in the boot, with which he is always depicted, has never been explained.

No. 21, a foot, has been attributed to St. Victor of Marseilles, but the shrine of St. Maurice at the church of St. Victor of Marseilles is more probable, though the attribution is far from certain.

No. 9 from Blackfriars, Nos. 6, 16 and 17 from Brooks Wharf, Nos. 2 and 15 from Dowgate, No. 13, at Queenhythe, Nos. 3, 8 and 12 are from the Thames, as are probably the other specimens, the find spots of which are not recorded.

NOTES

1. *Arch.*, XXXVIII, 132.
2. Giraldus Cambrensis, *c.* 1220, refers only to signs worn round the neck.