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XI.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE SILVER CHAIN CALLED "MIDSIDE MAGGIE'S GIRDLE." By ALEXANDER J. S. BROOK, F.S.A. Scot.

This girdle was exhibited to the Society in 1872, by Dr John Alexander Smith, and is described and figured in Vol. X. of the *Proceedings*, page 321, so that it is not necessary again to describe it.

Since then some additional light as to the identity of the heroine of the legend has been obtained, and a more accurate knowledge of the old Scottish hall-marks enables us to fix exactly the date of its manufacture.

I may recall in a few words the popular story of the girdle, which was given in full detail by Sir Walter Elliot of Wolfelee, in his annual address as President of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, and which is published in their *Proceedings* for 1869.

Sir Walter Elliot relates how Thomas Hardie was tenant of a portion of Tollies-Hill called the Midside Farm. A severe winter and other causes destroyed his flock, and he was unable to pay his rent. His wife, the Maggie of the story, applied to the Earl of Lauderdale for relief, and was told, as snow seemed so plentiful and destructive at Midside, he would consider the claim for relief if she brought him a snow-ball in June. Maggie accordingly prepared a quantity of snow in the following winter, which was kept very likely in some of the crevices of the high and rugged lands of Tollies-Hill, and which in June she brought to her landlord, reminding him of his promise. The Earl gave the relief claimed, and the Hardies subsequently thrived in the farm. The Earl, being a royalist, followed the fortunes of Charles II. to the battle of Worcester, when he was taken prisoner in 1651, and was subsequently confined for several years in the Tower. The Hardies, during these years, laid past their rents, and out of gratitude Maggie baked the gold pieces due into a bannock which she took with her to the Tower of London, and presented to the imprisoned earl. The story says that Maggie went to London on foot, and in the guise of a weak-minded Scottish minstrel passed the guards, and by the singing of Scotch songs attracted the notice of the

Earl of Lauderdale, to whom she was able to hand the bannock through the window of his apartment. Soon after, through the favour of Monk, the Earl was released and repaired to Holland. He afterwards returned with the king in May 1660, and, revisiting Scotland, presented Maggie, so runs the tale, with this silver chain, and allowed her and her children to sit rent free for their lives, with the remark that "every bannock has its maik but the bannock of Tollies-Hill."

The inquiry into this picturesque story naturally resolves itself into two distinct divisions:—first, what may be ascertained from an examination of the girdle apart from the legend; and second, what confirmation of the story itself can be obtained from the Lauderdale books and other sources.

On the back of the circular plate which forms the clasp of the girdle are stamped three hall marks, which form the only authoritative clue to the date of its manufacture.



So much obscurity has until recently surrounded the early Scottish hall-marks, particularly those previous to 1681, that it may not be out of place to explain briefly the regulations by which they were controlled. The main object of the Scottish enactment seems to have been to prevent fraud rather than to preserve a record of the date of manufacture, or to form a source of revenue. For this purpose it was enacted, in the reign of James II. in 1457, "as anent the reformacione of golde and siluer wro^t be goldsmythis ande to eschewe the desaving done to the Kingis liegis thair salbe ordanyt in ilk burghe quhair goldsmythis wirkis ane vnderstandande and cunnande man of gude conscience quhilk sall be dene of the craft. And quhen the werk is bro^t to the goldsmy^t and it be golde quhat golde that ever it beis bro^t till him he sall gif it fur^t agane in work na we^f than xx granys. And of siluer quhat ever be bro^t him he sall gif it fur^t agane na we^f na xj granys. And the said goldsmy^t sall tak his werk or he gif it furthe and pass to the dene of the craft and ger examyn that it be sa fyne as is befor wrettyn. And the said dene of the craft sall set his merk and takyn thairto togidder w^t the said goldsmytis. And gif faute be fundyne thairin efterwartis the dene forsaide and godesmytis gudis salbe in eschet to the king and

thair liffis at the kingis will. Ande the saide dene sall haif to his fee of ilk vnce wro^t j d. And quhair ther is na goldsmy^t bot ane in a towne he sall schawe that werk takinit w^t his awne merk to the hede officiaris of the towne quhilkis sall haif a merk in like maner ordanyt thairfor and salbe set to the saide werk. And quhat goldsmy^t that giffis furth his werk vtherwayis thane is befor wrettyne his gudis salbe confyskyt to the king and his life at the kingis will."

In 1483 it was enacted that, as "throw the negligence and avirice of the wirkaris . . . the pepill is ouer gretly scaithit and dissaut," there should be appointed "in ilk a tovne quhair that goldsmithis ar a wardane and a decane of the craft that salbe suorne thairto and examyn al the werkmanchip that cummys fra thair handis. And quhair thair fynd it sufficient set thair merkis thairto."

By the Act of 1485 "a dekin and a sercho^r of the craft" were appointed, and it was enacted "that al goldsmytis werk be markit w^t his avñ mark, the dekynis mark and the mark of the tovne of the finace of xj d fyne." In 1489 the standard was altered to that "of the fynace of the new siluer werk of bruges." These enactments were more strictly carried out in Edinburgh, where the great majority of the goldsmiths plied their craft than elsewhere in Scotland. Yet, notwithstanding the supervision exercised, there are found constantly recurring complaints of the baseness of the silver. In the Act of 1555 it is mentioned as occasionally having been found as low as "six and seven deniers," and the standard is again fixed at xj d.

In Edinburgh the goldsmiths formed a separate incorporation, although originally they were incorporated with the hammermen, like those in all the other Scottish burghs, and to them in 1586 James VI. granted a letter under the Privy Seal (ratified by Act of Parliament in 1587) authorising them to supervise the quality of "all gold and silver wark wrocht and made in ony pairt within this realme." And there are still extant letters¹ which they issued to the other burghs calling attention to the deficiency of their standard. But the quality of their own silver

¹ The draft copy of one of these letters may be seen fixed at the end of the oldest minute book of the Edinburgh Incorporation of Goldsmiths, and on it are also written the names of the goldsmiths to whom it was sent.

was by no means faultless, for much old Edinburgh plate is to be found which is under the standard. This girdle is an example in point. The silver of which it is made only assays 10 deniers 20 grains, while 11 deniers was the standard.¹ At present the standard is 11 oz. 2 dwt. to the 12 oz. The Edinburgh Incorporation made several alterations in the stamping of plate. In 1681 they abolished the deacon's mark, substituting that of the Assaymaster (altered again in 1759 to that of a thistle), and they added a date letter which is still continued. There is evidence that an attempt was made to introduce the date letter throughout Scotland, but it seemed to have been practised in a very spasmodic and irregular manner in two or three of the burghs, and subsequently to have been dropped altogether, as only a very few examples of it are now to be found.

It will be at once apparent that although these deacon's marks, which were abolished in 1681, were not primarily intended to indicate a date, yet incidentally they do so, when the marks can be identified with the names, and when the periods during which they held office can be ascertained.

The records and minute books of the Incorporation of Goldsmiths of Edinburgh, which date from 1525, have happily been preserved, and in them has been found a complete list of all the freemen of the craft and also of their deacons. The deacons' names are also to be found in the minutes of the Burgh Records, for it was one of the privileges or duties—and they seem to have regarded it as a disagreeable duty—of the deacons of the crafts to sit in the Town Council.

The name-punch on this girdle is that of Adame Allane. There were two goldsmiths of this name—apparently father and son. The father was admitted about 1561, and he seems to have been alive when his son was made a freeman of the craft on the 24th October 1589, for his son is designated Adame Allane yr. But it does not appear that he was alive at the date when this girdle was made, so that its manufacture may be attributed to his son. The mark which fixes the date is the last one—the deacon's. It is that of Robert Denneistoun (or Danielstoun, as it is

¹ Pure silver was reckoned as 12 deniers, and the denier was divided into 24 grains.

spelled in the Burgh Records), who was made a freeman on 23rd April 1597, and who filled the office of deacon from September 1608 to September 1610. His mark as deacon is found on two silver communion cups belonging to the parish church of Arbirlot, and it also appears as the maker of the silver gilt cup, now in the possession of George Heriot's Trust, which is said to have been used by George Heriot, and was supposed—although erroneously—to have been made by that famous goldsmith. Further confirmation of the date may be had by

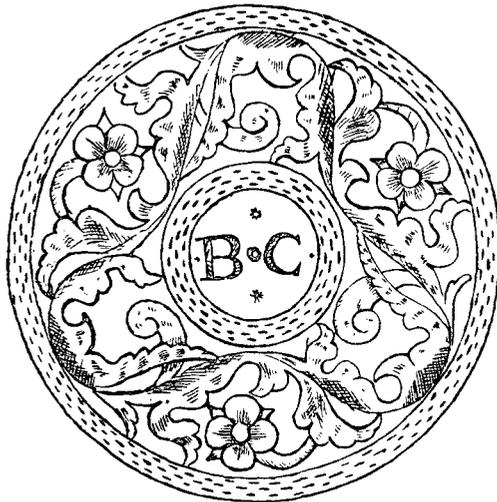


Fig. 1. Engraved Plate forming Clasp of Girdle (actual size).

comparing the town mark,—the castle, which varied in its character,—with that on other plate of the same period, when it will be found to be identical. I think, therefore, it may be accepted as beyond dispute that this girdle was manufactured in Edinburgh between 1608 and 1610.

Neither the chain nor clasp of the girdle call for much remark. The chain is made in the usual way of rings formed of round wire, which on being soldered together, were drawn through a draw-plate to give the form—that of a herring bone pattern, and set to the chain. It is well

made, and without the aid of machinery could not be done much better now. The chain is of two different sizes: the larger, which is next the plate, measures 2 feet 4 inches in length, and the smaller, which is divided by circular rings into six spaces of gradually increasing length, is 1 foot $11\frac{3}{8}$ inches long. The clasp of the girdle is formed of a circular plate $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches in diameter (fig. 1), which is decorated with an engraved ornament of roses and leaves, conventionally treated. The outer and inner borders show a form of ornamentation, somewhat resembling ermine, very widely used at that period. It may be noticed on the shields and lips of many communion cups, and also on the medals of the early portion of the seventeenth century belonging to the Royal Company of Archers. The quality of the engraving is an average specimen of what was common at that date. It presents all the features found on most of the engraved work made then, but these are not of sufficient importance to necessitate an examination in detail. In the circular shield in the centre are engraved the letters B C, which may have been done either at the time the girdle was made, or when it was presented, fifty years later. There is nothing in the character of the letters or in their treatment which is not equally applicable to both dates. As a rule, the Edinburgh goldsmiths, except in special cases, both made and engraved their own work, and one of its marked features is that they appeared to be much more proficient at ornamentation than in the formation of letters—as an examination of any plate of the first half of the seventeenth century will show.

At the end of the girdle is a bell-shaped pendant, ornamented with engraving of similar character to that on the plate. The girdle is in all 4 feet $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and weighs 3 oz. 19 dwt.

This concludes all that an examination of the girdle itself suggests to me, and I turn now to the history in general, and the Lauderdale books in particular, for the identification of the principal parties connected with the legend.

There is little difficulty in either stating or verifying the facts as to the Earl of Lauderdale. He was taken prisoner by Cromwell at the battle of Worcester on 3rd September 1651, and was confined to the Tower of London for several years thereafter. On his release he went to

Holland, whence he returned to Scotland in 1660, on the restoration of Charles II. In 1672 he married Lady Dysart, and was created a duke, and in 1682 he died.

An examination of the Lauderdale account books¹—summarised extracts from which are appended—reveals the fact that it could not

¹ Through the kindness of Robert Romanes, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., Harryburn, Lauder, I have been supplied with the following extracts, and to his courtesy the Society is also indebted for the exhibition of the girdle. The earliest notice which can be found of a Hardie in Lord Lauderdale's books is "Sept. 27, 1643, Thomas Hardie for personage Teind in Newbigging £55, 11s. 2d. Scots;" and there is a similar entry in 1644. On Mar. 24, 1648, Bessy Lylestoun paid for the parsonage Teind of Newbigging £55, 11s. Scots. The rent of Tullieshill between 1647 and 1700 seems to have been steadily £1066, 13s. 4d. Scots per annum, and the first rent entry found is "Andrew Hardie, £104, 3s. 4d.; Bessy Lylestoun, £104, 3s. 4d.; Richard Hardie, £325;—in all, £533, 6s. 8d. Scots, being a full half-year's rent." In 1648 the names of Andrew Hardie and Bessy Lylestoun again appear; but Bessie Hardie is substituted for Richard Hardie; and in 1649 there is a payment entered from Richard Hardie and Bessie Hardie, so they were probably husband and wife. The next notice of the Hardies was when the Countess of Lauderdale (the Earl being then in prison) in 1656 let to Alexander Hardie the east side of Tullishill, &c. for five years at a rent of £416, 4s. Scots; Andrew Hardie half of the west side, &c. for five years at a rent of £325, 4s. 8d. Scots; Richard Hardie and Thomas Hardie younger equally the other half of the west side, &c. £325, 4s. 8d. Scots,—in all, £1066, 13s. 4d. Scots per annum. The yearly rent of what Andrew Hardie and Bessy Lylestoun possessed in 1647 was £416, 13s. 4d. Scots, and Richard and Bessie Hardie's possession was then rented at £650 Scots. So in 1656 Alexander Hardie seems to have got the old possessions of both Andrew Hardie and Bessie Lylestoun; and Richard's possession seems to have been divided, and one half given to Andrew, and the other half equally to Richard and Thomas younger. In his rent accounts Alexander Hardie got credit for £32 Scots allowed to him for Bessy Lylestoun's house, and soumes of grass for 1658 and 1659; and Andrew Hardie got credit for £8 Scots as Bessie Hardie's house mail for the year 1658. Bessie Hardie and Bessie Lylestoun got pensions from 1664, £8 per annum (?). A Margaret Hardie was put on the pension list in 1666 at £16 per annum. Bessie Hardie's last payment was in 1672, and Bessie Lylestoun's last payment was in 1673. Margaret Hardie the pensioner was in 1673 in Longhope; and she seems to have been the wife of a person of the name of Watherstone, for in 1686 to 1688 the pension was paid to James Waderston in Longcroft for his mother Margaret Hardie. In 1678 Andrew Hardie was allowed £20 for building his house. In 1700 the tenants in Tollishill were Thomas Hardie, George Hardie, and Margaret Hardie. Thomas seems to have possessed that which in 1656 and 1661 was Richard's and Thomas's; George to have succeeded to Alexander; and Margaret is designated the "Relict of Andrew Hardie."

have been to a "Margaret Hardie" that the girdle was presented in 1660, but that possibly it might have been to a "Bessie Hardie." The discrepancy in the name may be explained on the hypothesis that the story teller, having ascertained that a Margaret Hardie existed in these parts, would find "Midside Maggie" with its alliteration, an attractive title, and would not mind strict accuracy. There was a "Margaret Hardie, relict of Andrew Hardie in Tulloshill," whose name appears in the Lauderdale books for the first time in 1666, but there seems to be a general belief that Thomas Hardie was the husband of the heroine of the story, and the girdle has accordingly, beyond the memory of man, been transmitted from Thomas to Thomas in the Simson family—whose ancestor married the heiress of the Hardies.

There was a Thomas Hardie in Newbigging in 1643-44, but his name disappears, and in 1648 Bessie Hardie's name appears as one of the tenants of Tullishill.

By one of three separate tacks, dated at Cannongait 14th August 1656, "Ane Noble Countess Dame Anna Home, Countess of Lauderdale let to Richard Hardie in Tulloishill and Thomas Hardie younger, equally betwixt them, the just and equall half of the west syde of Tulloishill and Nether Tullois, &c., &c., for five years from Whitsunday 1656. Rent £325, 4s. 8d. Scots.

Thomas Hardie was still a tenant in Tullieshill, at a rent of £325, 4s. 8d., when the farm passed into the Tweeddale family (who continue to hold it) in 1700.

From these extracts it seems possible that Bessie Hardie may have been the heroine of the legend. It has even been conjectured that the letters B C may have been the initials of her maiden name, but it is more probable that they were those of the first owner of the girdle. That it was made fifty years before the date of the story is undoubted, and I think this leaves the tradition standing *quantum valeat*.