

PILGRIM-SIGNS AND OTHER PEWTER BADGES

The pilgrimage was a medieval institution whose intimate connection with the everyday life of people of all classes it is not now easy to appreciate. To many these organized expeditions to some holy shrine afforded the only means of travel in an age when transport was bad and the hazards of the road many. The pages of Chaucer bear abundant testimony to the peculiarly medieval union of religious and secular elements which the pilgrimage involved. Occasionally a critic, such as Thomas Thorpe, the Wyclifite priest, in his examination before Bishop Arundel in 1407, would complain that "such fonde people waste blamefully Goddes goods in ther veyne pilgrimadis." But to the ordinary person there was nothing curious in the features which attracted people such as the Miller and the Wife of Bath side by side with the Poor Parson and the Ploughman. The pilgrimage was accepted both as an occasion for pious devotion and as an opportunity for cheerful travel and for novelty, and there can be little doubt that both these aspects contributed to the enormous popularity which it enjoyed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries.

The objects of pilgrimage were various. Some, such as the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury or that of Our Lady of Walsingham, enjoyed an international reputation. At the other end of the scale were a multitude of minor shrines such as that of St. Kenelm at Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, or the Rood of Grace, at Boxley, Kent; and some even, such as the shrine of Sir John Schorn, Vicar of North Marston, Bucks ("Sir John Schorn, gentleman born, conjured the devil into a boot"), or the tomb of Henry VI, at Windsor (Grosjean, *Henrici VI Angliae Regis Miracula Postuma*, Société des Bollandistes, 1935), the patron saints of which had never received the benefit of official canonization. And, between the two extremes, there were the great abbeys such as Winchester, Bury, and York, to which came pilgrims from all over the country.



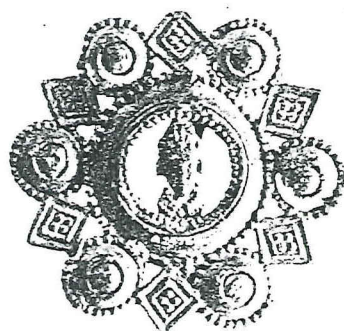
Pewter badges of St. Thomas of Canterbury from the Thames at London (†).



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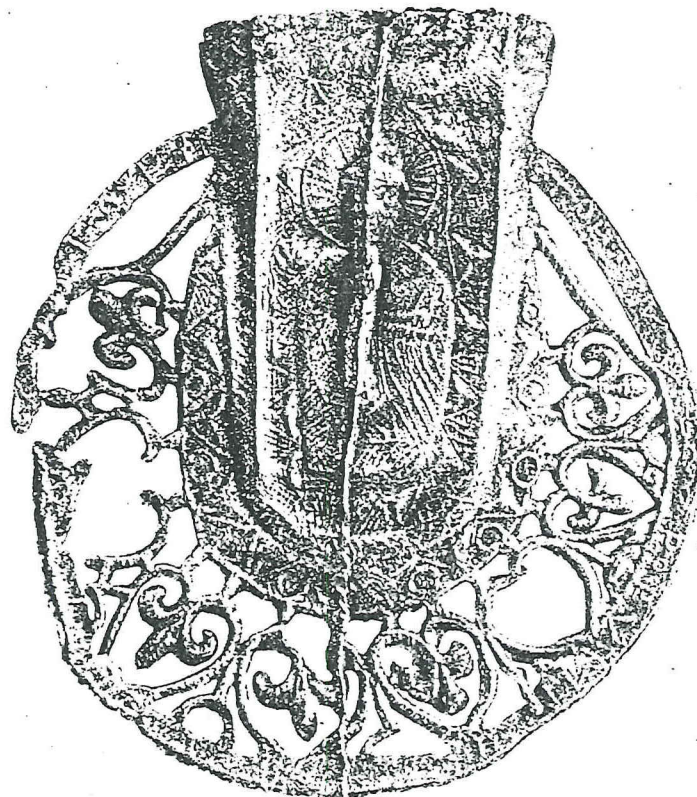


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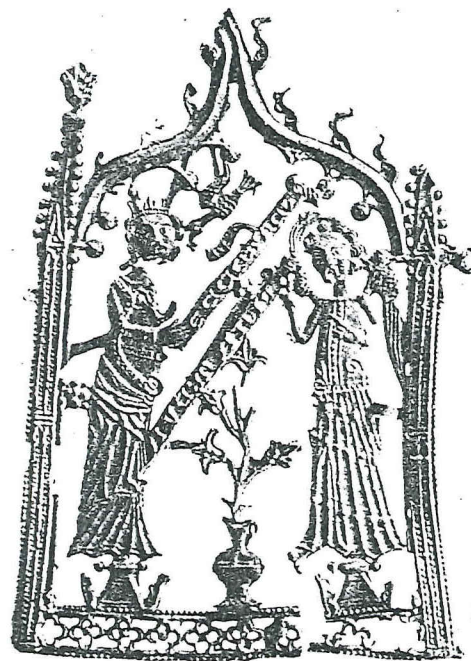
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Pewter badges of St. Thomas of Canterbury from the Thames at London (†).



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Pewter ampulla of St. Thomas of Canterbury from the Thames at London (†).



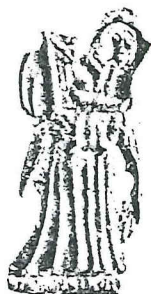
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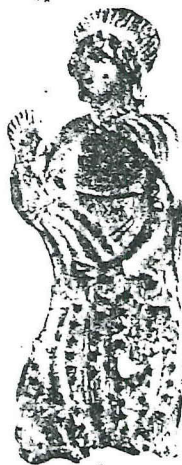
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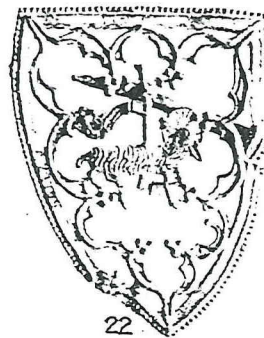


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Pewter badges from the Thames at London (†).



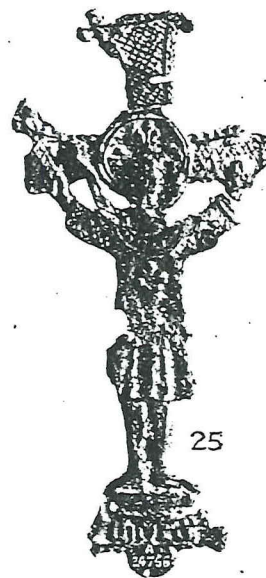
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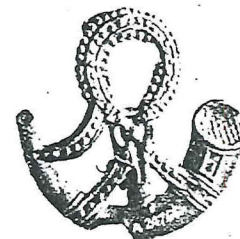
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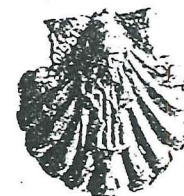
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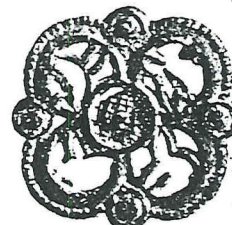
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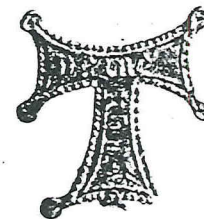
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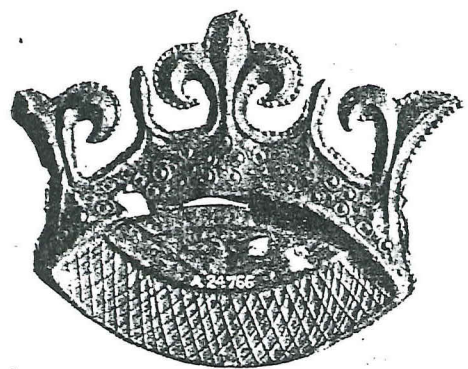


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Pewter badges from the Thames at London (†).



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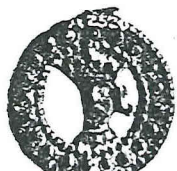
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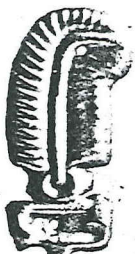
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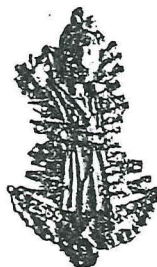
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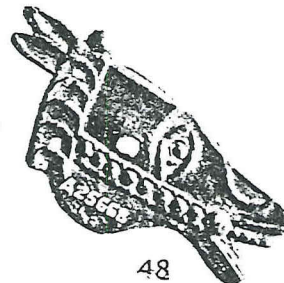
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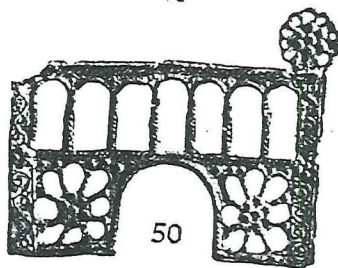
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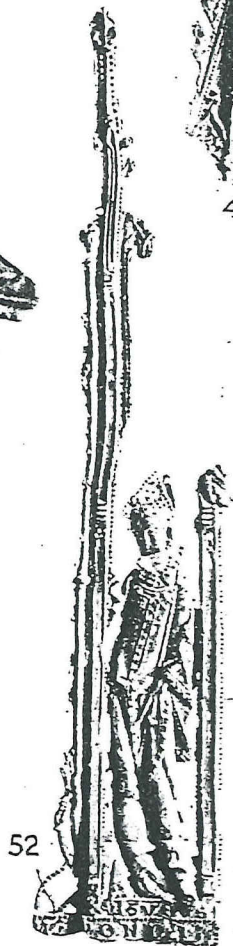
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Pewter badges from the Thames at London (†).

Pewter badges from the Thames at London. No. 42 is made of brass (†).



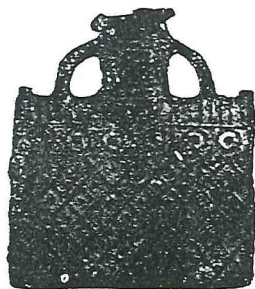
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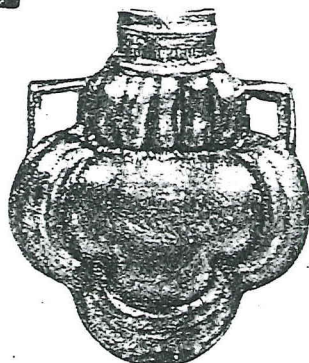
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Pewter ampullæ from the Thames at London (†).

The pilgrim was not restricted to England. The more pious and the more adventurous could visit the great continental shrines such as St. James of Compostella or St. Peter at Rome, or he might go yet farther afield to the cities of the East and to the Holy Land.

“ And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem ;
At Rome she hadde been, and at Bouloigne,
In Galice at Seint Jame, and at Coloigne.”

(The Wife of Bath ; Chaucer, *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*)

The pilgrim in Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman* (c. 1360-1400) was even more widely travelled :

“ And hundred of ampulles
On his hat seten
Signes of Synay
And shelles of Galice
And many a crouche on his cloke
And keyes of Rome
And the vernicle before
For men shulde know
And se bi hise signes
Whom he sought hadde.”

Sinai
St. James of Compostella

Genoa

In the east he claimed to have visited “ our Lordes Sepulcre ; in Bethlem and Babiloyne, I have been in both, In Armony and Alisaundre,” and he adds :

“ Ye may se by my signes
That sitten on myn hatte.”

The signs of which he speaks were usually made of lead or pewter, sometimes of brass, and they were sold at the various shrines as talismans and as visible tokens of pilgrimage.

“ Then, as manere and custom is, signes there they bought
For men of contré should know whom they had sought.”

(*Supplement to the Canterbury Tales*)

Sometimes they were worn round the neck, more often they were pinned on to the hat. Philip de Commines (vol. ii, 8) records that Louis XI used to wear “ an old hat and an image of lead upon it.”

The signs were made in stone or iron moulds, of which several are extant, e.g. one of St. Thomas in the British Museum, one in the Guildhall Museum, one of Our Lady of Walsingham

in King's Lynn Museum, and several in the Musée de Cluny, Paris. The manufacture was in the hands of the monks, and the regulations issued by Louis and Johanna of Sicily in 1354 to control their manufacture at St. Maximin, in Provence, show that it could be a source of considerable profit (M. Hucher, *Bulletin Monumental*, XIX; T. Hugo, *Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, 132). The Archbishops of Compostella had on several occasions to acquire authority to excommunicated persons selling scallop shell badges elsewhere than in that city.

Most of the badges belong to the 14th and 15th centuries. That they were used at a much earlier date is however clear from a passage in which Giraldus Cambrensis (*De rebus a se gestis ap. Angl. Sacr.*, ii, p. 481), writing before 1223, speaks of a company of pilgrims as recognizable by the signs hung about their necks. From their fragile nature they are very easily destroyed, and the largest collections are those that have been dredged from the Thames, now in the British Museum, the London Museum, and the Guildhall Museum, and those from the Seine in the Musée de Cluny, Paris. The identification of the individual signs rests upon the often ambiguous symbolism of the objects portrayed. It is noticeable that, with a few well-known exceptions, the signs in French collections differ from those found in England, and there can be no doubt that the majority of those listed below are of English derivation. Besides the pilgrim signs there are a certain number of secular badges, worn, it would seem, by the retainers of noble families, perhaps by members of certain guilds. It is possible also that, as in the 16th century (Sir John Evans, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, 2, xxii, 106), some of the badges may have been personal amulets unconnected with any formal pilgrimage.

For pilgrim signs, see further *Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, 128-34; LXXIX, 1929, 33; *Archæological Journal*, XIII, 1856, p. 133; *Journal of the British Archæological Association*, XXI (1865), 192-6; XXIV (1868), 219-30; C. Roach-Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua*, I (1848), 81-91; II (1852), 43-50; and Tancred Borenius, *Medieval Pilgrim Badges* ("Sette of Odd Volumes," 1930), with bibliography. For French specimens see Fourgeais, *Collection de plombs historiés trouvés dans la Seine*, Vol. II, *Enseignes de Pélerinages* (Paris, 1862-6).

St. Thomas of Canterbury

Thomas à Becket was murdered at Canterbury in 1171 and canonized in 1173, and the scene of his martyrdom rapidly became a centre of pilgrimage.

"And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seke."

(Chaucer, *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*)

The shrine had an international reputation, and several pewter badges of St. Thomas are preserved in continental collections. The Saint's London connections, however, naturally made his relics an object of special veneration to Londoners. His chapel on London Bridge must have been the starting-place of innumerable pilgrimages; and of the many pilgrim signs recovered from the Thames nearby it is notable how many are those of St. Thomas.

The signs usually take the form of a mitred head, sometimes, as in the Guildhall Museum, within a canopied shrine, or of a mitred figure mounted on a horse. Of the curios displayed to attract the pilgrim Canterbury bells were evidently popular:

"What with the noise of their syngyng and with the sound of their piping
and with the jangling of their Canterbury bellis and with the barking out of
doggis after them. . . ."

(The examination of Thomas Thorpe before
Archbishop Arundel in 1407.)

and pewter reproductions of these bells are not uncommon. More complicated signs are also found.

A 15307. A figure in bishop's robes without mitre, within a small shrine. Pl. LXVI, No. 7. From Fresh Wharf.

A 24766/1. Mitred figure mounted on a horse. Pl. LXVII, No. 12. See *Archæologia*, LXXIX, 1929, 33, Fig. 5. From the Thames at Dowgate.

A 24766/2. Mitred bust. Pl. LXVI, No. 1. See *Archæologia*, LXXIX, 1929, 33, Fig. 6. From the Thames at Dowgate.

A 24766/3. Mitred head. Pl. LXVI, No. 6. From the Thames at Dowgate.

A 24766/4. Mitred head within a circular frame set with circles and diamonds. See *Twenty-five Years of the London Museum* (1937), Pl. XXV, 1; *Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. IV, 4. Pl. LXVII, No. 11. From the Thames at Dowgate.

A 24766/5. Small mitred head. See *Twenty-five Years of the London Museum* (1937), Pl. XXV, 4. Pl. LXVI, No. 2. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/6. Small mitred bust. Pl. LXVI, No. 3. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/7. Small disc bearing a mitred head. Cf. C. Roach Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua*, I, Pl. XXXI. Pl. LXVII, No. 10. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/8. Small mitred head with traces of a surrounding shrine. Pl. LXVI, No. 4. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/22. Head of a horse, presumably from a sign similar to A 24766/1. Pl. LXVI, No. 8. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/41. Part of a Canterbury bell, inscribed C]AMPAN[A THOMAE. Cf. *Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. V, 9-10. From the Thames at Dowgate.

A 26156. An elaborate Lombardic T depicting the flagellation of Henry II at Canterbury on July 12th, 1174, in penance for the murder of Becket. See *Twenty-five Years of the London Museum* (1937), Pl. XXV, 6. Pl. LXVII, No. 9. From the Thames at London.

A 27323. A large ampulla depicting on the one side St. Thomas beatified, on the other his murder. The elaborate border bears the jingling hexameter: *Optimus egrorum medicus fit Thoma bonorum* ("Thomas is the best healer of the holy sick"). This inscription is also found on a similar ampulla in the Guildhall Museum, and other ampullæ of the same form are preserved in the British Museum (*Archæologia*, LXXIX, 1929, 33, Fig. 7) and in York Museum (C. Roach Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua*, Vol. II, Pl. XVIII). See *Twenty-five Years of the London Museum* (1937), Pl. XXV, 10. Given by P. A. S. Phillips, Esq. Pl. LXVIII, No. 13.

Our Lady of Boulogne

This shrine, conveniently situated on the French coast, was especially popular with English pilgrims, and its signs are as common here as they are abroad. Of the Wife of Bath, who had done all the right pilgrimages, we learn that "at Rome she hadde been and at Bouloigne" (Chaucer, *Prologue*). The sacred image was supposed to have arrived miraculously by sea in a crewless ship, and this is symbolized by the ordinary form of the token, an image of the Virgin and Child standing upon a crescent-shaped vessel.

A 24766/15-18. Four pewter signs of stock type. Cf. Roach Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua*, I (1848), Pl. XXXIII, 11, 14; II (1852), Pl. XVI, 7. Pl. LXXI, No. 41. Found in the Thames at London.

A 14606 and 14609. Two pewter signs of stock type. Pl. LXXI, No. 40. Found in the Thames at London Bridge.

Our Lady of Walsingham

This pilgrimage ranked second only to that of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and like it had an international reputation. Erasmus, in his dialogue *Perigrinatio Religionis Erga*, gives a picture of the returning pilgrim:

Menedemus. "What kind of attire is this that thou wearest? Thou art bedizened with semicircular shells, art full of images of tin and lead, and adorned with straw chains, and thy arm is girt with bracelets of beads?"

Ogygius. "I visited S. James of Compostella, and as I came back I visited the Virgin beyond the sea who is very famous among the English."

It is clear that the pewter sign was only one of the many knick-knacks which the pilgrim was expected to purchase.

Signs which may with certainty be ascribed to the Walsingham pilgrimage are not common, but to it probably belong many of the unidentifiable figures of the Virgin and Child. An ampulla found at Cirencester bears the crowned W of Walsingham, and another is recorded from Dunwich (*Archæological Journal*, XIII, 1856, 132-3). A mould for the making of Walsingham signs is preserved in the King's Lynn Museum, and it is possible, but by no means certain, that the workshop ascribed by Richard Southwell, one of Cromwell's visitors, to the practice of alchemy was in fact the seat of the manufacture of pilgrim signs (*Archæological Journal*, XIII, 1856, 133).

A 17216. An elaborate sign portraying the Annunciation, inscribed ECCE: ANC(I)L AVE: MARIA. A sign, almost identical but with the word WALSYNGHAM added below, makes the ascription certain (*Archæological Journal*, XIII, 1856, 133). See *Twenty-five Years of the London Museum*, Pl. XXV, 2. Pl. LXIX, No. 14. From London.

Unidentified Shrines of the Virgin

A number of badges bear simply figures of the Virgin and Child without further mark of identification. Many of these no doubt come from Walsingham.

A 14612. Portion of a badge depicting the Virgin, sceptred, and Child. Pl. LXIX, No. 15. From the Thames, London Bridge.

A 14613. The Virgin and Child, with a dove at her feet. Pl. LXIX, No. 16. From the Thames, London Bridge.

A 20828. Crude badge of the Virgin and Child. Pl. LXIX, No. 21. From Swan Pier.

A 24766/23. The Virgin within a vesica-shaped surround. Pl. LXIX, No. 19. From the Thames, London.

A 24766/24. The Virgin and Child in an open-work oval frame with censers and flowers. Pl. LXIX, No. 20. From the Thames, London.

A 24766/26. The Virgin and Child on a small ridged button. Pl. LXIX, No. 18. From the Thames, London.

St. James of Compostella

The shrine of St. James of Compostella in Galicia was the foremost centre of pilgrimage in western Europe. It was popular as far afield even as Denmark, where it is noticeable that the majority of the signs preserved in the National Museum at Copenhagen belong to this pilgrimage; and examples are not uncommon in this country. The signs take the form either of an actual scallop-shell pierced for suspension or of a representation of a scallop-shell in some other material.

A 14610. Pewter sign in the form of a scallop-shell bearing a representation of a pilgrim in a characteristic, wide-brimmed pilgrim's hat. Pl. LXX, No. 28. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 25357. Bronze badge in the form of a scallop-shell with a projecting stud on the back. A similar badge was found near the 14th-century pottery-kiln at Rye. Fig. 89. From St. Mary Axe.

St. Antoine de Viennois

A 24766. Pl. LXX, No. 31. Pewter tau-cross of the Order of Hospitallers of St. Antoine-de-Viennois. Inscribed P SIVE TAU (Potence sive Tau) the motto of the order. The broken loop at the base was probably intended for suspension of a bell. The tau-cross and suspended bell are portrayed on an ampulla from the moat at Canterbury, and the loop is again found on a cross from the Thames, now in the Guildhall Museum. The latter sign and one from the Thames at Dowgate (*Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. IV, 1) bear a crucifixion in place of an inscription, but otherwise they are similar to the present example.

The Abbey of St. Antoine in the Dauphiné, the mother-house of the order, was a famous place of pilgrimage on account of its cures for the epidemic disease known as St. Anthony's fire, and distinguished Englishmen, e.g. St. Hugh of Lincoln, in 1200, Earl Talbot, and others, in 1459, are known to have visited it. But pilgrim-signs similar to the present are rarely found outside England, and they must therefore be attributed to St. Anthony's Hospital in Threadneedle Street, the daughter-house established in 1243 (see, further, Dr. Rose Graham

260

in *Archæological Journal*, LXXXIV, 341-406). An exception is a fine pewter tau-cross inscribed STI ANTHONII DE PRESTO (the abbey of Praestø, another provincial shrine of St. Anthony) in the National Museum at Copenhagen (*Danmarks Kirke, Praestø*, Amt. I, p. 51, Fig. 21).

The tau-cross is occasionally to be found with another significance. The Vulgate rendering of Ezekiel lx. 4, "signa thau super frontes virorum gementium et dolentium super cunctis abominationibus," inspired its use on several medieval works of art, and it is probably in this connection that it is to be found on two tombstones at Southwell Minster (R. Graham, *loc. cit.*, p. 367), and upon certain brasses, e.g. of Elizabeth, wife of Sir Edward Tame, at Fairford, Gloucestershire, 1534; and of Sir John Touchet, Lord Audley, at Shere, Surrey, c. 1525. Found in the Thames at London.

Ampullæ

The use of ampullæ, or small flasks, goes back to early Christian times, e.g. the celebrated 6th-century ampullæ in the cathedral treasury at Monza, and in the Middle Ages they were common to many shrines: "and hundred of ampulles on his hat seten" (the pilgrim in the Vision of Piers Ploughman). At Canterbury they were filled with water from Becket's well, the water of which was, it was said, tinged with the martyr's blood, and elsewhere they might be used to contain holy water or consecrated oil. A fine example from Canterbury is listed above.

A 3817. Pl. LXXIII, No. 53. From the site of the Aquarium at Westminster.

A 8866. Pl. LXXIII, No. 57. From London.

A 2016. Pl. LXXIII, No. 56. From Thames Street. Other ampullæ of this form are known to have come from Canterbury (*Archæologia*, LXXIX, 1929, 33, Figs. 1-2).

A 20811. Pl. LXXIII, No. 54. From Swan Pier.

Royal Saints

Badges bearing either a crowned head or a simple crown are common, but in the absence of any further identifying mark an exact ascription is rarely possible. The two chief English shrines of Royal Saints were those of St. Edward, at Westminster, and of St. Edmund, at Bury, but there were others of a minor character, e.g. that of St. Kenelm, at Winchcombe (*Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. V, 11). For other signs of St. Edward, see *Journal of the British Archæological Association*, XXI (1865), Pl. 9, No. 4, and *Archæologia*,

261

XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. IV, 7; of St. Edmund, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, XXIV (1868), Pl. 17, No. 12.

A 2520. A crowned head within a circular frame. Pl. LXXI, No. 36. From London.

A 20810. A crowned head within a circular frame which bears a garbled inscription: IANCOVLMAS (?). Pl. LXXI, No. 35. From Steelyard.

A 24766/20. A similar badge, but crownless. Pl. LXXI, No. 34. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/28. A large crown. Pl. LXXI, No. 32. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/29. A small crown. Pl. LXXI, No. 33. From the Thames at London.

The Knights Templars

The signs of this order seem invariably to bear in some form or other the badge of the Templars, the Paschal Lamb.

A 8872. Pl. LXX, No. 24. From London.

A 24766/13. Pl. LXX, No. 23. From the Thames at London. The inscription is a garbled version of AGNUS DEI.

A 24766/14. Pl. LXX, No. 22. From the Thames at Dowgate. An almost identical example from the Thames is in the British Museum (see *Archæologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. V, 1).

St. Hubert

The sign of St. Hubert, the patron saint of hunting, is the hunting-horn. The location of the shrine, or shrines, for which these signs were made is by no means clear.

A 24766/10. Pl. LXX, No. 27. From the Thames, London.

A 24766/11. The identification of this sign is rather dubious. From the Thames, London.

A 24766/12. Fragmentary. From the Thames, London.

The Five Wounds

Signs representing the five Wounds of Christ are not uncommon, although it is hard to identify the shrine from which they were purchased.

A 1379. A straight-sided cross within a circle, with circles at the five intersections. There is an identical sign in the Guildhall Museum. From London Wall.

A 2107. Pl. LXX, No. 30. From Thames Street.

A 20814. Pl. LXX, No. 29. This sign retains the pin by which it was attached to the clothing. From Swan Pier.

St. Paul

The sword, symbolizing the execution of St. Paul, is not a common sign. It was presumably purchasable in London, at St. Paul's Cathedral.

A 14608. Pl. LXX, No. 26. From the Thames at London Bridge.

Miscellaneous Badges, some of civil character

A 295. A collar of SS, 15th century. Pl. LXXIV, No. 62. From Brook's Wharf, Thames Street.

A 2518. Cruciform badge of uncertain significance. Pl. LXXII, No. 47. From Cloth Fair.

A 2540. Small pewter pin with a circular head. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 2569. A figure standing upon a crescent. Possibly a version of Our Lady of Boulogne. Pl. LXXII, No. 44. From Westminster.

A 14581/1. The right-hand panel of an elaborate shrine, containing the figure of a bishop, and at his feet the inscription SATV..S (?). Beneath the whole the inscription . . . NA.MONDI :. Pl. LXXII, No. 52. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 124581/2. Probably part of the canopy and mitre of a sign depicting St. Thomas within a shrine. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 14581/3. Part of an elaborately canopied shrine. Pl. LXXII, No. 46. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 14581/4. Part of the foot of a shrine. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 14607. Small leaf-like sign with a stud behind. From the Thames at London Bridge.

A 20250. Fragmentary badge with an illegible inscription SIG (?) From the Thames at London.

A 20809. A shrine with central opening and Romanesque arcading above. Pl. LXXII, No. 50. From Steelyard.

A 20812. A chained swan. This was the personal device of the Bohun family and this may be a retainer's badge. See *Twenty-five Years of the London Museum*, Pl. XXV, 11. Pl. LXXIV, No. 63. From Swan Pier.

A 24766/19. A bust within a circular frame. Pl. LXXI, No. 37. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/21. A bird's wing. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/25. A figure in long-sleeved costume, c. 1450, holding a child. Possibly for St. Christopher. Pl. LXIX, No. 17. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/27. A much-battered kneeling figure. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/30. A fish. Pl. LXXII, No. 49. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/31. A small badge with an illegible central device. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/32. A human-headed bird. Pl. LXXIV, No. 58. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/33. A bagpipe-player. The costume belongs to the latter part of the 15th century. Pl. LXXIV, No. 59. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/34. Probably part of a badge, the Pelican in her Piety. Pl. LXXII, No. 45. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/35. A wodewose. Pl. LXXIV, No. 60. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/36. A centaur armed with a bow. Pl. LXXIV, No. 65. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/37. A small heart, (?) for the Heart of Jesus. Pl. LXXI, No. 38. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/38. The upper part of a quiver? Pl. LXXIII, No. 55. From the Thames at London.

A 24766/39. A crucifix. Pl. LXX, No. 25. Two similar signs are preserved in the Guildhall Museum, and they may perhaps be ascribed to the Holy Rood at Boxley which was much visited in the Middle Ages. See also *Archaeologia*, XXXVIII, 1860, Pl. IV. From the Thames at London.

A 25611. A loop with simple scroll-work on both faces. Pl. LXXIV, No. 64. From the Thames at London.

A 25667. An armed, mounted figure, perhaps St. George. The sword-belt is of early 15th-century type. Pl. LXXI, No. 39. From London.

36.146/2. Bronze badge, a kneeling figure. From Fetter Lane, on a site where the medieval material belonged almost exclusively to the 15th century. Given by H. S. Gordon, Esq.

SMALL ARTICLES OF DRESS

(i) *Belt-chapes*

The variety of forms of belt-chape in use during the Middle Ages is so large that an exhaustive account is impossible within the scope of this catalogue. It is, however, possible