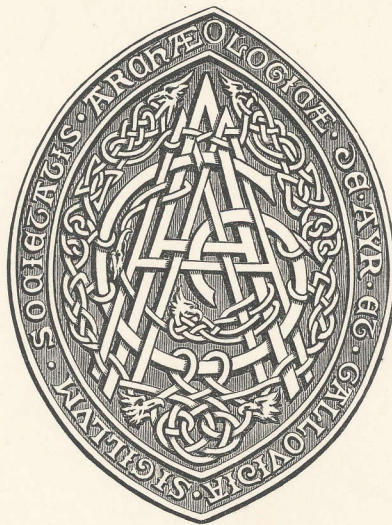


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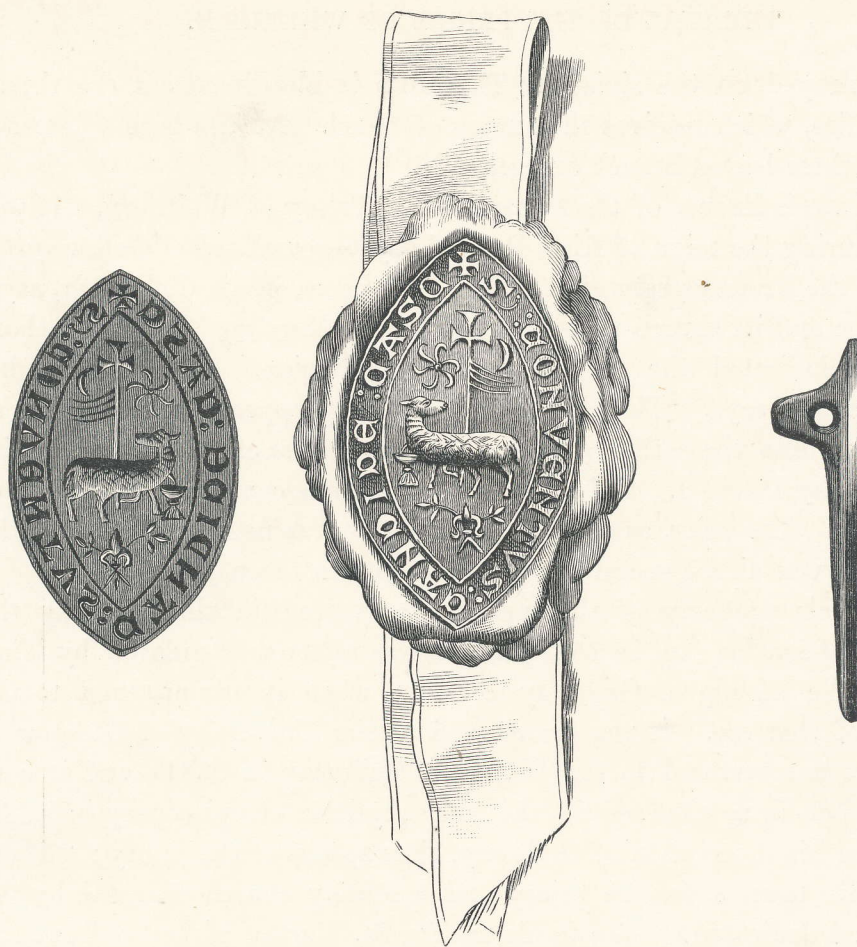
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### III.

#### THE SEAL OF THE PRIORY OF WHITHORN.

THE Seal, of which an illustration is given, was found on 5th August 1891, in the Manse Garden at Souleseat, in the parish of Inch, Wigtownshire, by John Paton, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., H.M. Register House, Edinburgh, while on a visit to his son the minister of the parish.

The Seal is oval in form, and the legend is

S. : CONVENTUS : CANDIDE : CASE.

*Charge.*—The Pascal Lamb, carrying holy banner, the staff of which terminates upwards in a cross, with a crescent on the dexter side and an



estoile, six-rayed, on the sinister. The lamb is bleeding from the throat into a chalice, which receives the stream of blood. At the base a fleur-de-lis with a three-leaved branch on each side.

But little is known of the history of the Priory of Whithorn. It was founded during the reign of King David I. by Fergus Lord of Galloway for canons of the Premonstratensian Order. Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, says, "The house and its church were dedicated to St. Martin of Tours, to whom had been dedicated the original church by Ninian." Chalmers, in his *Caledonia*, also says, "The church of this priory appears from its size to have formed also the cathedral church of the diocese of Galloway upon its restoration by David I. : and the prior and canons compose the chapter of the bishops. The prior, as dean of the chapter, was next in dignity to the bishop, and was vicar-general of the see during its vacancy."

The whole property of this priory was vested in the king by the General Annexation Act in 1587; and it was afterwards granted by King James to the Bishop of Galloway in 1606, when it was annexed to the revenues of that see. It was transferred to the University of Glasgow in 1641; but was restored to the Bishop of Galloway in 1661; and it continued to belong to that see till the final abolition of episcopacy in 1689. Symson, in his description of Galloway, thus speaks of the priory: "There was in this town a famous priory and a stately church founded by St. Ninian, and dedicated by him to his uncle, St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, in France, as I have heard it reported. Sure I am, there is a little hand-bell in this church, which, in Saxon letters, tells it belongs to Saint Martin's church. The steeple and body of the church is yet standing, together with some of the walls of the precincts. The isles, crosse-church, and several other houses belonging thereto, are fallen; but several large and capacious vaults are firme and intire."

Its present condition is best described by the learned archæologist, Mr. Muir: "What its original form and dimensions were it would be hard to conjecture by any means short of a thorough investigation of the foundations, for all that is visibly remaining is what seems to have been the nave of the church, a plain narrow oblong, measuring internally 74 feet in length. The tower, of which there are still traces, stood at the south-west corner, and was probably Norman; at any rate a small part of the church adjoining its site is in the style of that period, and contains a fine semicircular-headed doorway of four shafted orders, embellished with the usual zigzags and



other characteristic devices of the twelfth century. Eastward of this the work is of late thirteenth-century date, and in it are some four or five long single-light windows with pointed heads, and near to the east end a small pointed doorway with moulded jambs and imposts carved into quasi-capitals. In the east elevation there is nothing particularly noticeable, the only features being a small lanciform gable light, one of larger size under it, and a great square aperture at the ground. Internally the aspect of the building is anything but interesting. Of original features the only attractive ones are two large arched recesses of ornamental character in the east end of the north wall. Eastward of the church, and rising to what may have been the original level of its floor, are several rudely constructed crypts, respecting the age and uses of which I entertain no definite opinion. It is likely that under and around the church there are many vaulted cells of the same kind." Mr. Muir's description is from a note in the *Life of St. Ninian*, by Bishop Forbes.

As to how the Seal of Whithorn Priory came to be at Souleseat, one can but conjecture that, as both the Priory of Whithorn and the Monastery of Souleseat were of the same order, some one from the former may have been on a visit to the neighbouring Monastery of Souleseat, and have dropped the Seal when there.

The Society is indebted for the use of the Seal to the Rev. James A. Paton, Minister of the parish of Inch.

HEW DALRYMPLE.

