GO WITH THE FLO

Today started much earlier than usual (8.45 – I am not a morning person!) as I was asked to give a talk to my colleagues at Northamptonshire Record Office. Newly based at the Record Office, my new colleagues wanted to know what it is that I do.

I love giving talks, its one of the best parts of my job. I get to sit and pull together all the information that has been collected, and then communicate it to members of the public who never knew what they never knew about their local history! Every artefact is like a small piece of a huge jigsaw and over time you see more and more of the bigger picture. The problem is that I have so much to pack into a hour long speech, its hard to cover everything and keep on time. I can easily do an hour each on medieval seal matrices, Roman brooches, Medieval Northamptonshire, the Treasure Act, PAS in general.

The talk focussed on how I process finds, the 1996 Treasure Act and interesting finds from Northants. Some of my favourite finds are the ones that I have had the chance do do a little extra research on.

The first case study was the seal matrix recorded on the PAS database as LVPL-E6AA83 (treasure number 2013 T39), found near Barnwell and acquired by Oundle Museum. The inscription reads BERENGAIVS. Barnwell had three Berengar's associated with it, all members of the la Moine family. This seal dates to the 13th century, and so is unlikely to belong to the first Berengar, who died before 1166. The second Berengar had a very short succession, dying in his father's lifetime between 1166 and long before 1248, when his son deceased. Therefore, although it could have belonged to the second Berengar for a short period, the higher likelihood is that this silver seal belonged to the Third Berengar, who appears to have become known in local legend as 'Berengar the Black'.

'Berengar the Black' was Keeper of the Peace in Huntingdonshire in 1267 and went to the Crusades to escape debt in 1270. He rebuilt Barnwell Castle in 1266, but without permission from Edward I and so was forced to sell it to the Abbot of Ramsay in 1276. He died before 1286.

The great thing about using this seal matrix as an example in a talk to a room full of archivists was that we were able to show some partnership working. In the Record Office archives was the original conveyancing document (Record Office ref: YZ 3487 – image attached, copyright Northamptonshire Record Office) for the enforced sale of the castle to the Abbot of Ramsey. The document had Beregar's personal seal attached. Disappointingly the seal does not match up with the one acquired by Oundle Museum, but it was not unusual for one person to have more than one personal seal in his or her lifetime, so it could still be his. How exciting!

I'll try to get round to writing some shorter posts about some other interesting case studies I used in my talk.

But for the rest of the day, I'll be catching up on some emails and recording a box of 20+ finds from one finder so I can get them back to him next week. No treasure in there – some Roman coins, a saxon strap end, some Post-Medieval buckle fragments – but all important parts of the jigsaw. They are all bagged up individualy with a 10 figure grid reference written on each bag. A text book example of best practise!

But first, a coffee!