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MEDIEVAL SEAL MATRICES FROM NORFOLK, 2002

by Andrew Rogerson and Steven Ashley

This paper is the fifth part in a consecutive annual catalogue of medieval seal matrices to be published in this journal. As usual, impressions of all the matrices contained in this catalogue are available for study at Norwich Castle Museum.

The catalogue is divided into sections headed thus: official secular, official religious; personal seals with arms; personal seals with names; personal seals with mottoes; with initials only; without inscription; illegible. As far as possible entries are in alphabetical order.

The organisation of the catalogue entries is as follows. Material, overall shape of matrix. Shape of die, and size. Central motif. Surrounding inscription (and translation). Parish name and SMR number. Any reference or supporting information.

The inscriptions of the impressions have been rendered as faithfully as possible, with illegible letters thus: Inferred letters have been put in square brackets. Some spaces have been added to make the reading clearer. There is no full stop added after the inscription to avoid confusion with any dot contained within the inscription itself.

As ever, we are grateful to Paul and Elizabeth Rutledge for their help with a number of difficult readings and interpretations.

Official secular seals

1. Silver, hexagonally faceted conical handle, broken, terminal missing, four small punched dots near top edge of reverse. Circular, 18mm. A single-masted ship with rigging and furled sail, the cross at the beginning of the inscription is engraved so that it appears to be flying from the top of the ship's mast. + : RVMMILOV : It is possible that this refers to Romney, Kent, one of the cinque-ports. The name was spelt *Romenel* in 1086 and *Rumenel* in 1130 (Ekwall 1960, 392). Sall 29291. Fig. 1.

Official religious seals

2. Silver, flat with single shaped bar attached to rear by solder arched to form loop at one end. Oval, 25 x 18mm. Virgin and Child, both crowned, below trefoil canopy. * hERVIV' ECCE RECT SWINTHORPE' MA (Hervey rector of the church of Swainsthorpe Magna; the N and the P are retrograde). Found close to the site of the church of St Mary, which was last in use in the early 16th century. Swainsthorpe 9724. Fig. 1.

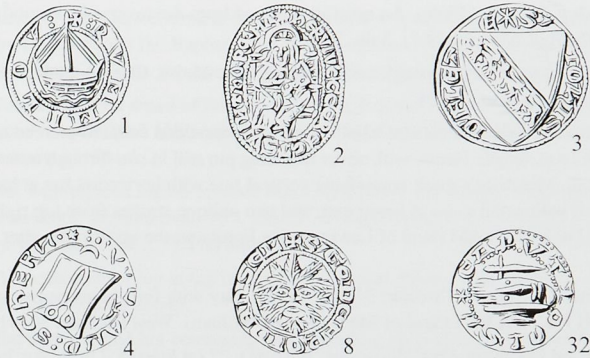


Fig. 1 Impressions taken from seal matrices. 1: Sall.
2: Swainsthorpe. 3: Thurlton. 4: Hindringham.
8: Oxborough. 32: Cawston

Personal seals with arms

3. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with triple-collared pierced trefoil terminal. Circular, 22mm. A shield bearing *On a bend three lions passant*. * S' IOHIS D'FLETE (Seal of John De Flete; the inscription is interrupted by the corners of the shield). Although these arms are unrecorded for Flete (Woodcock, Grant, and Graham 1996, 5), a likely candidate is perhaps John Flete, Abbot of West Dereham in 1398 (Doubleday and Page 1906, 418). It may also be significant that the findspot for this matrix lies only 7.5km from Langley Abbey, which with West Dereham and Wendling comprise the only Premonstratensian houses in the county. Thurlton 36226. Fig. 1.

Personal seals with names

4. Copper alloy, flat with median rib ending in pierced lug on reverse. Sub-circular, 20 x 18mm. A pair of shears on a hide, a crescent above, a small bird, head downwards, to the right. * : [...] ANd : SChERN (Seal of Andrew ?Shear). Perhaps derived from Old English *scir*, 'fair or 'bright'; may be metonymic for Shearsmith, 'a maker of shears, scissors' (Reaney and Wilson 1991, 404). Hindringham 24909. Fig. 1.
5. Copper alloy, flat with median rib ending in pierced lug on reverse. Circular, 24mm. Tonsured bust of man facing right. + S' BENET · DE BOTOLFISDALE (Seal of Benet of Botesdale). 'Diss' 37707.
6. Lead, flat with square-sectioned pierced lug at top. Circular, 32mm. curling stalk with central flower. Engraved line around border on reverse. + SIGILL' EVSTACI Id'LE' (Seal of Eustace Idle). Salle 29291.
7. Lead, flat with no lug. Circular, 33mm. A fleur-de-lis. + SIGILL GALFRIDI CARETER (Seal of Geoffrey Carter). Croxton 37327.
8. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pierced terminal, small punched dot near top edge of reverse. Circular, 18mm. Head of a green man. + S' GODEFROI DANSEL (Seal of Godfrey Dansel). Old French *danzel* meant 'young man, young noble' (Reaney and Wilson 1991, 125). There may be some irony intended in the juxtaposition of the name and motif. Oxborough 2634. Fig. 1.
9. Lead, flat with broken pierced lug at top. Circular, 30mm. Octofoil with pellet between each foil. Cast relief design on reverse of a very stylised ?anthropomorphic fleur-de-lis between two pellets in chief, an outward facing crescent containing a pellet on both sides and a sun with radiating rays at base. + SIGILL' hEWEI FIL' WLVIWE (Seal of Harvey son of Ulviva; oblique cross-hatching as filler at end of inscription). Colkirk 37302.
10. Lead, flat with flattened pierced lug at top. Pointed oval, 26 x 20mm. Damaged and obscure design. Cast relief design on reverse of a very stylised downward-pointing fleur-de-lis. + S' IOHIS + AMY (Seal of John Amy, trapezoidal block as filler at end of inscription). Stokesby with Herringby 37474.
11. Lead, flat with no lug. Circular, 28mm. Damaged by shallow groove across diameter. Elaborate, but crudely engraved cinquefoil. + SIGILL' I BARDING (Seal of John Barding; the N is retrograde). The surname Baddyng/Badding must be cognate with Barding. It occurs eighteen times in the Norfolk Lay Subsidies of 1327 and 1332, but only in parishes within 10km of Howe, Carleton St Peter, Langley and Shotesham (once each), Framingham Pigot (thrice) and 12 times in Rockland (Hawes 2002, 539). Howe 37672.

12. Lead, flat with no lug. Circular, 23mm. An octofoil (pierced from the reverse by secondary perforation). + S' Ioh' FIL' RUE-G (Seal of John son of ?). Salle 29291.
13. Lead, flat with break at top (?lug missing). Lozengiform, 28 x 25mm. Cross pomme. * S'IVLIAN hARALD (Seal of Julian Harald). Colkirk 37128.
14. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with triple-moulded collared pierced trefoil terminal circular, 19mm. Suspension loop, length 16mm, with silver fastening pin still in *situ* through trefoil head. Traces of white metal plating overall. Merchant's mark comprising vertical line with horizontal bar at base with short vertical arm attached on left with small cross at lower end, and two oblique strokes from top right of main vertical line. * S' LAURENCII DE FORDhAM (Seal of Lawrence De Fordham; the apostrophe after the 'S' is very large). Rocklands 34984.
15. Lead, flat with pierced lug at top. Circular, 34mm. A cross paty with foils between the arms of the cross. + SIGILL' MARTINI FIL' WILEL'I (Seal of Martin son of William). West Rudham 30441.
16. Lead, flat with pierced lug at top. Oval (lower half missing), 27 (at least) x 23mm. An ?anchor. + S' MAT VRSI · (Seal of Matthew ?). Snettisham 1503.
17. Lead, flat with scar of missing lug at top. Circular, 31mm. Octofoil with spiky holly-like leaves. + SIG' PhIL' FILII RICARD' (Seal of Phillip son of Richard). Rollesby 37711.
18. Lead, flat with flattened pierced lug at top. Circular, 32mm. Elaborate quatrefoil. + S' · RADVLFI · FIL' · IOh' · (Seal of Radulf son of John). Oxborough 2634.
19. Lead, flat with projecting pierced lug at top. Pointed oval, 39 (including lug 48mm) x 23mm. Reverse decorated with concentric rounded ovals around longitudinal bar. Running lion with elongated, rather wolf-like, snout and mane. + SIGILL · RICARDI · FILI · GALFRIDI · (Seal of Richard son of Geoffrey). Colkirk 37130.
20. Lead, flat with un-pierced lug at top. Pointed oval, 36 x 21mm. Ear of wheat with flanking leaves and pellets at stalk. + SIGILLUM · ROBERII (Seal of Robert). Roughton 37667.
21. Lead, flat with pierced lug at top. Circular, 32mm. Fleur-de-lis formed by incurving leaves flanking ear of wheat. * S' ROBERTI F' ROB' DE WEL'h · (Seal of Robert son of Robert de Wel[ham?]). Tacolneston 35667.
22. Lead, flat with un-pierced lug at top. Circular, 27mm. Six-pointed star above crescent. * S' ROB'I PISTORIS (Seal of Robert Baker). Pentney 32803.
23. Lead, flat with pierced lug at top. Circular, 34mm. Octofoil with pellet between each foil. Cast relief design of a cross on reverse. + SIGIL. ROGERI DE SOVED (Seal of Roger South). Colkirk 37302.
24. Lead, flat with no lug. Pointed oval, 32 x 20mm. Fleur-de-lis formed by incurving leaves flanking ear of wheat. + SIGILL' THOME MALOT (Seal of Thomas Malot). *Mal-ot* is a diminutive of Mall (Mary) (Reaney and Wilson 1991, 295). Happisburgh 17351.
25. Lead, flat with squashed lug. Pointed oval, 31 x 27mm. Damaged, ?originally blank centre. ... S'ThSEMNI · EIETMLII (Seal of ?Thomas ??, poorly engraved and illiterate). Wretton 37439.
26. Lead, flat, with small suspension-lug at top. Oval, 32 x 24mm. Fleur-de-lis. + SIG W' FII' NICH (seal of William son of Nicholas). Quidenham 33171.
27. Lead. Circular 26mm. Reverse decorated with border and moulded concentric circle with a rounded pellet at the centre; slight transverse rib ending in perforated lug at top edge. Elaborate quatrefoil. + S' WILELMI ChAPMAN (Seal of William Chapman, the N is retrograde). Postwick 31087.
28. Lead, damage around edge. Circular 28mm. Reverse decorated with two moulded concentric circles with a rounded pellet at the centre. Stubs of one or possibly two opposed ?handles/projections at edge. Irregular cross. S' WILIAM WODEFORED (Seal of William Woodford, no initial mark before S' in inscription). Little Witchingham 37279.
29. Lead, flat with pierced lug at top. Circular, 28mm. Elaborate eight-petalled flower. + SIGILL' WIL'I LEGREWE (Seal of William Grewe). Runcton Holme 28741.
30. Lead, flat, with no lug on reverse. A very robust example, weighing 80.5g (2.84oz), 5.5mm thick, edge with rounded underside. Circular, 38mm. Four-petalled flower. :SIGILL' · WILL · FIL' · ROGERI (Seal of William son of Roger). Knaption 36971.

Personal seals with mottoes

31. Copper alloy, 'conical handle' (cast only). Circular, 16mm. A ?squirrel sejant. + AAIIVIDI (meaning uncertain). Thetford 37197.

32. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with double-moulded collared pierced trefoil terminal. Circular, 18 mm. Head of John the Baptist lying horizontally on a platter with the executioner's sword above. * CAPVT IOhIS // (Head of John, the inscription starts above the top of the head). Cawston 7461. Fig. 1.
33. Copper alloy (found 1997, no detail of reverse recorded). Pointed oval, 27 x 18mm. A bearded and capped bust facing left, a star above the head and another to left of neck. + CAPVT*SERVI*DEI (The head of God's servant). Whissonsett 37196.
34. Copper alloy, flat with pierced lug on reverse; burnt, blackened and friable, with harder corrosion in part of the legend and central motif. Pointed oval, 30 x 18mm. An eagle displayed. + CRAS DACOR NON O...IC (Tomorrow give your heart not ...?). Fincham 33343.
35. Copper alloy, flat with pierced lug at top on reverse. Circular, 19mm. Lion rampant. * CREDE · FERENTI · (Trust the bearer). Shouldham 28645.
36. Copper alloy, flat with pierced lug containing iron corrosion on reverse. Pointed oval, 25 x 13mm. A bird with downward curving neck and two thin curving strands held in the beak. + CREDEI * IC IOhI (Believe, here is or this is, John). The bird may be the eagle of St John the Evangelist or (also associated with St John the Baptist) a dove. Stanfield 7241.
37. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with narrowed pierced pointed terminal. Circular, 18mm. A hare facing left. * DEIVESV V (?garbled 'Prive su': I am private). Salhouse 37258.
38. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with pierced terminal. Circular, 15mm. A crested bird walking to left. * IIVESV/ (?garbled 'Prive su': I am private). Roydon 32764.
39. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pierced terminal. Circular, 19mm. A bird walking right with its head turned back to view a small ?star. * IE SVY POICONV ('I am a die': this is perhaps a rebus involving *poignon*, the French for die or stamp (or awl or engraving tool), the word *pélican*, and the bird depicted in the centre). Wiveton 33250.
40. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pierced terminal. Circular, 18mm. Confronted male and female busts, ?dove above and heart below. * IOSV.....V'IEL (I am?). Ormesby 36967.
41. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pierced terminal. Circular, 16mm. A squirrel. * PRIVESV · (I am private). Aldeby 37185.
42. Copper alloy, flat with broken pierced lug on reverse. Pointed oval, 21 x 13mm. eight-pointed star above crescent. * REDE VLS DI (Read else die). Very poor inscription. Shelton 34604.
43. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pointed terminal with trefoil perforation. Oval, 20 x 17mm. A pelican in her piety. * SVM PELICANVS DEI (I am a pelican of God). Emmeth 37211.
44. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted handle with pierced terminal. Circular 18mm. Standing stag facing left. * TIMETE DEVM (Fear God). Quidenham 35174.

With initials

45. Copper alloy signet ring. Large and very robust loop, probably a glove ring. Irregular oval bezel, 13 x 12mm, ring with chamfered sloping shoulders and a plain 'D'-sectioned loop, 28mm. Crowned Lombardic 'T' with foliage sprigs at both sides. Little Witchingham 37279.

Without inscription

46. Copper alloy fragment of seal ring, band broken and incomplete, angled shoulder. Oval bezel, very worn, 14 x 10mm, *Lion rampant* within wavy-line border. This ring may date to as late as the 16th century. Elsing 37108.

Illegible

47. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with pierced trefoil terminal, and incised six-armed star for orientation of top of seal. Circular, 20mm. Letter 'I' to dexter of *Griffins head erased* within double cable border containing illegible inscription * S' (cancelled by striking). Quidenham 33171.
48. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with pierced pointed terminal. Circular, 16mm. Very corroded, with unidentified device (possibly a beast of some kind) within two interlaced squares. Traces of single ?letter in each of the angles. Mattishall 37083.
49. Lead, damaged and corroded, one end bent and curled behind reverse. Pointed oval, 40 x 24mm. Foliate device. + ELAOC (largely illegible). Mattishall 37083.

50. Lead, flat, badly distorted fragment. Circular, 34mm. Elaborate fleur-de-lis. + S.....AN.....ERTH (largely illegible). Wood Norton 36583.
51. Lead, flat, fragment only. ?Circular, slightly more than 25% of original surviving with two clean-cut edges, 17 x 15mm. Only small part of central design survives.]ILL O[(largely illegible). Sisland 21871.
52. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared pierced terminal. Circular, 19mm. Device of a ?fish-hook with saltire on shank between two five-pointed stars, its loop in the border at the start of inscription.nGLAMAIS (largely illegible). Sall 37084.
53. Copper alloy, hexagonally faceted conical handle with collared broken pierced terminal. Circular, 19mm. Surface worn and blank. Wymondham 37418.

2001 Corrigendum

(*Norfolk Archaeol.* 44, 134)

2. An alternative reading, with which we are in agreement, has been suggested for this damaged matrix by Paul Rutledge:
 + [.....] GILLUM ROBER [.....] ILI WALTERI
 ...] BASIGHAM MIA [...
 (Seal of Robert son of Walter (de) Bessingham (?)). 'The family of de Basingham were enfeoffed of ['Basingham' (or Bessingham)]' and 'Robert son of Walter de Basingham' appears in an undated deed recorded by Blomefield (1807). The find-spot of this seal matrix in Gresham is only 430m from the boundary with the adjacent parish of Bessingham.

Over 300 matrices have now been published since the first of these summaries appeared, in *Norfolk Archaeology* 43 (Geake, Rogerson and Ashley 1999), and some basic overall statistics are presented here. These involve three variables: the categories under which examples are ordered; type of metal; and shape.

Official Secular: silver circular 1, copper alloy circular 3, copper alloy shield-shaped 1. **Total 5**

Official Religious: silver pointed oval 1, silver oval 1, copper alloy circular 1, copper alloy pointed oval 5, lead pointed oval 1, uncertain material pointed oval 1. **Total 10**

Personal with arms: copper alloy circular 8, copper alloy oval 1, copper alloy shield-shaped 1, lead circular 2. **Total 12**

Personal with names: gold circular 1, copper alloy circular 19, copper alloy sub-circular 1, copper alloy oval 1, copper alloy pointed oval 10, copper alloy lozengiform 1, lead circular 68, lead pointed oval 34, lead oval 4, lead lozengiform 2, lead fragment 2. **Total 143**

Personal with mottoes: copper alloy circular 57, copper alloy pointed oval 11, copper alloy oval 2, copper alloy shield-shaped 1, lead circular 1. **Total 72**

Initials: copper alloy finger-ring 15, copper alloy circular 3, copper alloy octagonal 1. **Total 19**

Without inscription: silver oval 1, silver cube 1, copper alloy finger-ring 1, copper alloy circular 8, copper alloy oval 7, copper alloy sub-circular 1. **Total 19**

Illegible: copper alloy circular 10, copper alloy pointed oval 1, copper alloy oval 1, lead circular 10, lead pointed oval 7, lead hexagonal 1, lead fragment 1. **Total 31**

Type of metal: copper alloy 170, lead 134, silver 5, gold 1, uncertain 1

Shape: circular 192, pointed oval 71, oval 18, finger-ring 16, lozengiform 3, shield-shaped 3, sub-circular 2, hexagonal 1, octagonal 1, cube 1, fragments 3

Total number of seal matrices: 311

Some trends are already very clear, although recording of a larger sample will in time enable more profound analyses. Personal matrices with names, almost all of the late 12th and 13th centuries, form the largest category, within which lead circular examples are most frequent. Personal matrices with mottoes, the next most common, date to the 14th century (Rigold 1977). Only one of these was of lead, the remainder (98%) being of copper alloy. It is regrettable that in previous parts of this catalogue no reference has been made to a paper by the late Sue Margeson in this journal on fourteen Norfolk matrices with mottoes, all of copper alloy apart

from one of silver. Impressions of these finds were retained at Norwich Castle Museum (Margeson 1985).

Lead matrices (43% of the total) are more common in this listing than they are in museum collections, probably because in times before the introduction of metal detectors examples in silver and copper alloy were more visible to the naked eye, and thus more likely to be retained. Only two out of 28 matrices in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum described by Cherry (1991) were of lead. In a list of 104 examples of 12th–16th century English and Welsh personal seals, with inscriptions and without arms, in the British Museum, only 28 (27%) were of lead (Tonnochy 1952, 119–38). It is clear that the current level of finds recording is yielding a variety of metal matrices more truly representative of the range current in medieval times. This accumulating record is particularly satisfying, for these small objects are physical reminders of the well-known 13th-century property market boom, a phenomenon that reached quite low amongst the ranks of the peasantry (Campbell 1981, 21–6; Williamson 1984).

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