

# A MEDIEVAL PERSONAL SEAL MATRIX FROM NEWARK, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

by

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In April 1994, during a rescue excavation at Church Walk South, Newark, a personal seal was discovered. The rescue excavation was carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeological Trust for Newark and Sherwood District Council. It involved the removal of human skeletal remains immediately to the south of the church of St Mary Magdalene (NGR SK 799539) prior to environmental improvements.

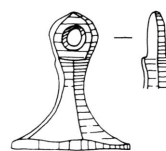
The seal was discovered 0.25m below the surface, within a brown silty sand deposit formed by the constant intercutting of the area for interments, which lay between the paving slabs and the orange gravels of the natural geology. No human remains were found in direct association with it.

The seal is made of copper alloy; the base is circular with a slightly concave hexagonal-conical handle surmounted by a pierced loop (diameter 15mm, height 16mm, Fig. 1.A). In the centre of the design there is a bird, possibly a heraldic device known as a 'Martlet' or swallow, which is used to represent the fourth son (Scott-Giles 1958). Around the edge appears the legend \*PRIVE SV (*prive suis*, I am private), which appears to have been produced with a gouge (Fig. 1.B).

This is an example of a Series II seal-matrix (Rigold 1977, 324). Examples of this type with personal names are rare, and the majority, of which this is an example, appear to have been bought ready made. This series appears to have been produced using gouges and rotary tools, which often distorts

the Lombardic lettering associated with the seals (Rigold 1977, 325).

Tonnochy (1952, 144) lists six seal dies bearing this motto and derivatives of it, all dated from the 14th century. Stratified examples of this series also suggest that they were most in use around 1300, being replaced in the later 14th century by signet rings.



1cm

A



0 1cm

B

FIGURE 1: Medieval personal seal from Newark, (A) hexagonal conical handle (scale 1:1), and (B) seal design (scale 2:1).

## REFERENCES

Rigold S.E., 1977. 'Two Common Species of Seal Matrix', *Antiquaries Journal*, 57, 324-29.

Tonnochy A.B., 1952. *The Catalogue of British Seal-Dies in the British Museum*.

Scott-Giles C.W., 1958. *Boutell's Heraldry*.