

## Aberystwyth University

### *Guidelines for cataloguing and recording seals*

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1st Edition



Archives & Records  
Association  
UK & Ireland

# Guidelines for cataloguing and recording seals

Charlotte J. Berry, Philippa Hoskin and Elizabeth A. New



August 2024

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Come and join us... 

# Contents

<b>Foreword, Archives and Records Association</b>	3
<b>Preface</b>	4
<b>Introduction:</b>	5
Top tips for starters	5
Handling, housing and conserving seals	6
Handling seals	6
Housing seals	6
Conserving seals	7
Elements of seal description	7
<b>Guidelines for Cataloguing and Recording Seals:</b>	8
Section A: Information from the parent document	8
Section B: Recording the seal(s)	9
Section C: Elements of a seal and some example descriptions	14
Section D: Flowchart for recording seals	16
Section E: Photographing seals and sealed documents	18
<b>Supplementary Information:</b>	20
Section F: An introduction to seals and sealing practices	20
Section G: Tips and suggestions for navigation and recording	25
<b>Appendices:</b>	
Appendix 1: Examples of motif keywords and images	28
Appendix 2: Timeline: seals and sealing practices in Britain (to be reformatted)	35
Appendix 3: Glossary of terminology relating to seals and sealing	40
<b>Suggested Further Reading</b>	42
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	44



**Archives & Records  
Association**  
UK & Ireland

## Foreword

'Guidelines for Cataloguing and Recording Seals' by Charlotte J. Berry, Philippa Hoskin and Elizabeth A. New is a comprehensive guide to all matters relating to seals. With five sections ordered under thirteen categories (excluding Preface) which include three appendices, this will undoubtedly become a well-used resource for professionals and volunteers faced with working with unknown seals or wishing to learn more generally about seals in their collections.

For the reader, there is no aspect of seal making and seal use that is not explored in this book. Copious illustrations guide the reader through uses of seals, especially regarding attachment to documents. Elements of selected seals are highlighted. Motifs on seals are illustrated in glorious detail.

At fifty-seven pages, this is a comprehensive publication. It is well laid out, easy to use, is full of excellent colour illustrations that complement the text which is comprehensive in its own right.

The work extends beyond seals attached to legal documents and includes *fob seals* and seal presses as well as paper wafer seals. Even seal bags and seal *skippets* (metal case) are included. A time line for seal usage in Britain is also included – from the eleventh to the twentieth-first centuries – down to the reign of King Charles III.

A glossary and suggested reading list further enhance the consultation of this volume. Many will be interested in the listing of repositories – Britain, Ireland and further afield – which complete this resource.

The authors are to be congratulated on a superb publication. The Title Page states that this is a first edition! One can hope for many more editions – especially as the authors request to be notified of repositories with significant holdings of seals which may have been omitted in error from this edition.

This is a labour-of-love which has resulted from a very positive process of academic and professional collaboration, originating in a shared love of everything to do with seals. I hope it is one which will have a positive impact across many sectors and that the Guidelines will become well thumbed by professionals and volunteers (and the general public) everywhere.

Congratulations to all involved!



**Aileen Ireland**  
ARA President August 2024

# Preface

Seals are a fascinating and often neglected element of administrative records and archival studies. They can sometimes seem complicated to understand, or to be something which provides no real additional information to a document. For these reasons, they can often be ignored by archivists when cataloguing the documents to which they are attached.

Yet seals do provide us with vital information: they were the necessary legal validation of many documents. Their motifs tell us about how institutions thought about themselves. And seals can reveal much about the tastes, concerns and even sense of humour of thousands of individuals of no great importance who are otherwise just known to us through their names alone.

Seals can be far less difficult to describe and understand than many people think. These Guidelines to cataloguing and recording seals are proposed to remove some of these uncertainties.

These Guidelines are intended to be just that: advisory guidance. These are not a set of prescriptive rules, but are designed to be adapted and to be adaptable to local circumstances, to fit with institutions' current cataloguing practice, staffing and resources. We hope (and feedback has suggested this is true) that these Guidelines will be valuable for a wide range of users from different backgrounds and countries. They have however been written mainly with archivists working within the UK and Ireland in mind, and the ARA have therefore kindly offered to support their publication and promotion.

Some parts of these Guidelines will be more applicable than others in particular professional circumstances, so we encourage you to start with the Contents' page and to choose what you need for your individual project and repository. The first section of the Guidelines is intended to be brief and to give an overview of seals and enough information to start cataloguing and recording work. The following Supplementary Information and various Appendices go into much more depth, but are entirely optional. Specialist terminology is put into italics and can be looked up in the Glossary. It's been challenging to decide what to include and what to leave out, and we have tried to find a balance that suits both experienced professionals and those starting out amongst seals.

Please, do make use of these Guidelines and do provide us with feedback (including images) which we can incorporate into a second edition during 2025. Dr Elizabeth New (ean@aber.ac.uk) will be the point of contact for collecting these suggestions together.

During the production of these Guidelines, archivists, curators, librarians, conservators, trainees and volunteers from museums, libraries, archives (national, local and private) in the UK, Ireland and overseas and from the UK's Portable Antiquities Scheme attended workshops and feedback sessions (online and in person), completed questionnaires, and provided us with their own experience of using the guide in practice. Further details of these contributors are listed in the Acknowledgements at the end of these Guidelines. We are enormously grateful to all of you for your comments, enthusiasm and encouragement, and we hope that these Guidelines will be of practical help to many more professionals and volunteers in the future.

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# Introduction

Why learn about seals? Many people with an interest in history are likely to have come across seals if they have done any work using archive collections – and by seals, here we don't mean the marine mammals, but rather the wax items attached to documents!

The study of seals and sealing practices (technically known as sigillography) has witnessed a renaissance since the 1990s, especially as developments in technology enable new discoveries to be made. The *Sigillvm*,<sup>1</sup> TNA<sup>2</sup> and *DigiSig*<sup>3</sup> websites provide useful introductions to seals and seal studies, as well as the Glossary and Further Reading.

Historically, seals were a topic of interest for antiquarians, often with a heraldic focus, who collected and made casts from impressions or took impressions from extant *matrices*. Nowadays there is a large range of fields where an understanding of seals is beneficial, and where those skills can bring new approaches to *sigillography* e.g. art history, material culture, archaeology, history, local history, genealogy.

Seals combine material, textual and visual culture, making them an appealing area of research. They are three dimensional, often have text on them, usually are attached to documents, and have visual *motifs*. So, a range of skills is needed to understand them in a professional or research setting. In the UK and Ireland, seals are not often studied or taught during training for archivists, historians, curators etc.

These Guidelines are therefore intended to plug a gap in skills, for professionals, academics and indeed anyone else interested in seals. Seals also have particular requirements for handling, digitisation and conservation, so all these areas will be covered in differing levels of detail in the Guidelines.

## Top Tips for Starters

When recording seals, whether *matrices*, *casts* or *impressions* associated with documents, there are a few key points to keep in mind when starting this work or if asking colleagues unfamiliar with seals to carry this out instead:

- **Any information is better than nothing! Even just noting the presence or absence of a seal is useful.** Sections B and G respectively give a brief overview and go into more detail about how to catalogue seals.
- Don't expect to be an instant expert – it can be challenging for even the most experienced

sigillographers to identify a *motif* or *legend* with confidence! Equally, don't be put off by a lack of experience, as this comes with time. The pilot for these Guidelines has shown that enough skill can be developed quickly over a short period.

- A good starting point is to make no assumptions regarding any prior knowledge of seals by users. Be as clear as possible when cataloguing and recording seals.
- Remember that not all users will be familiar with technical / iconographical terminology, and many colleagues may not be either. Use Plain English as much as possible, and imagine you are writing a catalogue entry for somebody entirely new to both archives and seals.
- Aim to be as consistent as possible when cataloguing, and how/where you are recording each element relating to seals. It is very useful to keep a note of definitions and how decisions are made and to compile some style guidelines at the start of the project. Ensure work is checked and edited at suitable points in the project's workflow, in order to pick up inconsistencies in style and content.
- Only record/catalogue information from the attached document if you are confident that the cataloguer has the necessary skills to do so. See Section A below for details.
- ISAD(G)<sup>4</sup> (2nd edition) is the main archive cataloguing standard currently used in the UK, whereas SPECTRUM<sup>5</sup> (version 5.0) is used by the UK museum sector. If you are uncertain about any elements of description, then refer to in-house style guidelines, ask colleagues elsewhere for professional input or devise standards from scratch where necessary. You may need to seek guidance on using a collection management system or if cataloguing in Word/Excel/by hand.
- Create digital images of the seals and attached documents during cataloguing if possible. Make these available as part of the overall catalogue record. High-quality images can also help to minimise the need to handle seals. Make sure that any images of seals follow pre-agreed specifications for image size/resolution, file type, file naming etc, and that the images are backed up following your institution's best practice. Section E below gives more details, or seek technical advice if necessary.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sigillvm.net>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/seals/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://digiSig.herokuapp.com>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ica.org/en/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition>

<sup>5</sup> <https://collectiontrust.org.uk/spectrum/>

- Remember that seals are three-dimensional objects. This can be easy to overlook if you are used to dealing primarily with flat/2D documents and archives! The Guidelines below will remind you what to include for this aspect of seals.
- Make sure that the cataloguer has a good work area available:
  - Find space for a PC/laptop (if using) and/or notebook, with additional room to unpack the seal/document and to lay it out.
  - Remember to use pencils only for writing when working around original documents.
  - Avoid placing the seal/document on a hard surface – instead, use a book cushion, foam support or a piece of smooth cloth without fluffy bits which might get caught in the seal impression.
  - Avoid holding a seal at height e.g. when standing. Hold instead close to a worksurface, in case of dropping accidentally from height.
  - Weights may be required to flatten out the original document and possibly to keep the seal with the impression uppermost for photography. Small snake weights are particularly useful for this purpose, but ensure that these do not cause strain to be put on the attachment or wax.
  - Ensure that lighting is good and does not cast shadows.

### Handling, housing and conserving seals

- Always seek guidance from a qualified conservator before embarking on any project to record seals.
- Follow your local conservation protocols and guidance, if available.
- If you are planning volunteer input, you may need to put in place specific instructions and detailed workflows in advance of the project start. Allow enough time for this.

### Handling seals

- Be extra careful and vigilant always when handling wax seals – they are often fragile and can be fragmentary or vulnerable to deterioration. Look carefully at the document and attached seal before deciding best how to pick it up and carry it.
- Most seals are best handled with clean, regularly washed dry hands rather than wearing gloves. In particular, cotton gloves can easily catch in cracks in the wax and can make the handling of small seals difficult.
- If the seals are made of metal (*bulla and matrices*), or if there is a seal bag / fabric wrapping or cords associated with the sealed document, nitrile gloves should be worn.
- Seal impressions made into true sealing wax are particularly vulnerable to compression damage, especially when a document is being unfolded or if stored in a tightly packed box. To minimise the risk of the wax striking a hard surface and chipping/cracking, place the document on a sheet of inert foam or cloth.

- Shellac seals are most vulnerable to cracking. This tends to occur when the parchment or paper to which they have been applied is handled or if cockling occurs to the surface.
- *Pendent seals* are particularly vulnerable at the points where the form of attachment enters and exits the wax or lead disk, and where the attachment joins the document. **Never pick up a sealed document by the form of attachment only!**
- If a wax seal is in a condition where handling could cause further damage, it should be photographed for reference. A conservator should be alerted, and cataloguing should not proceed until safe to do, pending possible conservation treatment or repackaging. In some situations, it may not prove possible to catalogue seals in poor condition, or to make only a very brief record.
- Ensure that the attached document is unfolded or that a *skippet* is undone carefully, whilst the seal weight is supported to prevent damage.
- Minimise the time for which seals are left exposed under bright lights, especially if the bulbs are physically warm.

### Housing seals

- If you do not have in-house conservation available, use the ICON Conservation Register<sup>6</sup> to find an expert appropriate to provide advice and assistance on housing/storing seals.
- Be aware that individual conservators and studios may have differing preferences of practice when it comes to housing seals. Each building, storeroom, collection and different types of seals can also require a range of approaches – there is no ‘one size fits all!’ Decide on your key criteria e.g. time, staff, resources, significance, and use that to make decisions about conservation, preservation and (re)housing seals.
- Acid-free housing (envelopes, folders etc) can be a simple and effective storage solution on a large scale, and these housings are readily available via preservation companies.<sup>7</sup>
- Avoid storing seals/attached documents in archival polyester envelopes or wrapping, as these can become static and then can lift ink from the surface of the parchment.
- Avoid wrapping the seals themselves in cotton wool as it is abrasive, and the threads can become stuck to the seal surface. Also avoid bubble wrap as this is not generally inert– use instead Tyvek (or equivalent product) or a soft acid-free tissue paper if necessary.
- Seal bags can be purchased from conservation suppliers, but are usually made of material which can often be too large/thick to be very useful.
- Storage boxes of varying types can be custom-made to bespoke measurements if needed for star and regularly viewed items. Remember to consider whether the document will be laid flat or not, and how that will impact on how the seal is housed within the box.

- Consider physical access to your storage areas e.g. will storing 'star' items in large flat boxes make moving boxes around tight spaces and/or stairways more difficult or impossible? Can you store them somewhere else, even if for brief temporary periods?
- Do take into account the space you have available. There is no point having sealed documents rehoused in lovely new boxes if you have no available shelf space on which to put them!
- Remember that there is very likely a researcher out there who will want to look at these items out of their box or envelope etc, regardless of how seals and sealed documents are stored at your institution. They are likely to want to look at the back of the document and the seal too. You need to factor this need in when planning (re)housing work on seals, rather than spending money and time on doing something to be undone later.

### Conserving seals

- If you do not have in-house conservation expertise, use the ICON Conservation Register to find an appropriate expert to provide advice and assistance on preservation and conservation.
- Be aware that individual conservators and studios may have differing preferences of practice when it comes to managing seals. Each collection and different types of seals require a range of approaches – there is no 'one size fits all'! Decide on your key criteria eg time, staff, resources, significance, and use that to make decisions about conservation, preservation and (re)housing seals.
- Accumulated dust and dirt can be removed from intact seal impressions with a soft brush, but never do this without the advice of and training from a conservator.
- You may wish some seals to be cleaned and/or conserved so that they can be handled safely for cataloguing, digitisation and user access in the future. Seal impressions can be cleaned, and cracks and chips can be repaired, but all such treatments should be full documented and reversible, as is standard conservation practice. This work is time consuming and can be expensive, so you may need to undertake a review of your collection to decide which items to choose for this approach over time.

### Elements of Seal Description

- The international archive cataloguing standard ISAD(G) is generally used to describe seals and all associated information within field 3.4.4 "Physical characteristics and technical requirements". However, seal descriptions are also often found in field 3.3.1 "Scope and content" aka "Description" and form part of the overall description of the document to which the seal is attached.

- Follow existing in-house style (or devise this from scratch if needed). This may depend on whether you are using cataloguing software or cataloguing instead in a spreadsheet or word-processing programme.
- Be consistent in your choices and ensure that the different elements describing the seal are given in the same order each time.
- If using the "Scope and Content" field for describing seals, it is good practice to set out the different elements of the description in a set format/layout, making it clear which section describes the document, and which section describes the seal. In most archival practice, the document is usually described first within "Scope and Content", and the seal part then follows.
- If using the "Physical Characteristics" field for describing seals, set out the different elements of the seal description in a set format/layout. Be sure not to mix up information which should be in "Scope and Content" (the document and which should be in "Physical Characteristics" (seal description).
- The following format/order of cataloguing elements is suggested and is explored below in Sections A, B and G in more detail:
  - Owner / user of the seal (NB they may be different)
  - Date the impression was made
  - (Level of description/cataloguing)
  - Physical attributes of the seal:
    - Quantity of seals
    - Form and attachment
    - Material
      - Colour
      - Damage
    - Shape and size
    - Impression (usually a combination of motif and legend)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.conservationregister.com>

<sup>7</sup> Suppliers of conservation supplies can be found on the internet or on the advice of conservators.



# Guidelines for Cataloguing and Recording Seals

Follow the Guidelines given below in Sections A and B, and the result should be consistently and uniformly formatted catalogue records. This type of method is needed particularly when a wide range of cataloguers are working on a joint project, especially over prolonged time periods and where inherited catalogue data may vary considerably - consistency and accuracy are the key goals for achieving high-quality catalogue metadata.

Once you've read Sections A and B, if you wish to find out more about what seals actually are, how they were used, how documents were sealed, and how to identify them – go to Sections F and G in Supplementary Information, and / or consult the Suggested Further Reading section.

## Section A: Information from the parent document

These Guidelines are intended to help those cataloguing and recording seals, not cataloguing the documents to which the seal is attached. For the latter, follow local practice and confine this specialist work to appropriately qualified or experienced individuals, as advanced language and palaeography/handwriting skills may be needed. The theoretical and practical approaches to archive cataloguing also differ significantly from museum or library cataloguing, with items usually described within a relational/hierarchical/multi-level collection structure. You will however need to include some basic information about the document if none is already available – seek guidance in such instances.

Most or all of this descriptive information may already be available via an item-level archive catalogue record for the document itself. If you are in luck, only details relating to the seal may be missing and needing to be recorded from scratch. Or available information may be sketchy, inconsistent and needing revision and updating.

It is helpful to add information from the parent document where this is not already recorded. The 'parent document' is the document to which the seal is attached, regardless of whether the document and seal(s) have since parted company. If you can, try to identify the seal user(s), the date of the seal, and the level of catalogue description, as detailed here below.

### • Seal user

If the owner of the seal can be identified, start the description with 'Seal of [name of individual/institution/office in full]'. If the seal does not have a name on it, or if the name is not that of the person(s) identified in the document, state 'Seal user unknown' or 'Seal owner unknown'. You will need to do this for each seal, if there are multiple seals extant.

For information on identifying the owner, see Section E below.

### Examples:

- 'Seal of William de Ferndon' (Exeter Cathedral Archives 220)  
<https://www.imprintseals.org/document/5903>
- 'Seal of Madoc ap Hova' (ap Iorwerth, Dean of St. Asaph) (Denbighshire Archive Service, DD/WY/2030) [https://www.newa.wales/collections/getrecord/GB209\\_DD-WY\\_1\\_5\\_1\\_1](https://www.newa.wales/collections/getrecord/GB209_DD-WY_1_5_1_1)
- 'Seal of Nicholas (ap Gwrgant), bishop of Llandaff' (National Library of Wales, Penrice & Margam Ch. 1) <https://www.imprintseals.org/document/1186>
- 'Seal of the Mayor of Salisbury' (Dorset Record Office, PE-WM/TD/1/16/4) <https://archive-catalogue.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/records/PE-WM/TD/1/16/4>
- 'Seal owner unknown' (Westminster Abbey Muniments 2018: none of the seal impressions have legible legends, so no seal owner can be assigned with certainty)  
<https://www.imprintseals.org/document/6246>

### • Date

Follow any in-house guidelines on dates which are already available. These date formats are often standardised, as archives and museums move increasingly towards using cataloguing software, particularly online via digital formats, where absolute consistency in dates is needed to facilitate online searching.

Be particularly aware of how you denote centuries, parts of centuries, uncertain dates/circa, double dating (for Old/New Style dates) etc. The methodology for dates used in the NCA Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names (1997) provide a good starting point, not least as they are also used by many UK archive repositories for cataloguing guidance:<sup>8</sup>

- The 'date' = this is the date on the impression was made. For a seal on a document, this information will usually already have been included in the catalogue information for the date of the parent document.

<sup>8</sup> <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/ncarules/>

- If this date is not already available in the cataloguing entry, either give the date of the document or provide as good an estimate as possible. For the latter, use circa or square brackets, according to usual custom. If you are not able to estimate, make this clear, as somebody else may be able to provide this information at a later date.
- Note that the same seal matrix could be used for centuries by a single institution, if there was no reason to change it. Record this if you don't think the *matrix* is contemporary with the document e.g. '1520 impression of 13th century seal'.
- For matrices and casts, provide as good a date as possible or no date if this is completely uncertain.

#### Examples:

- 'Seal Note: Early 13th century' (TNA, DL 25/319/264) <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C16099272>
- 'Dates: 1307-05-28' (Archive Centre, King's College, Cambridge, GBR/0272/GBR/121) [https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/repositories/7/archival\\_objects/309830](https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/repositories/7/archival_objects/309830)
- 'Suggested date: Medieval, 1250-1350' (Portable Antiquities Scheme, NLM-9CF840) <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/1058959>

#### • Level

- A seal may be attached to a single document, which has already been given a Reference Number for that one item. Or the document may itself form part of a bundle or file of documents. This "Level" needs to be recorded, partly as this information is often used to build the hierarchical or multi-level structure which makes up archive catalogues.
- The seal(s) should ideally be recorded at item level as this provides a useful level of detail. Often single documents already described are done so in quite a bit of detail, so you can just add in your new details about the seal(s) attached or associated (if detached) to the document.
- The seal may alternatively form part of a bundle/file of documents. This is very common, not least as this approach speeds up the archive cataloguing work required as less detail is included. Such items should ideally be sub-numbered within a bundle, so that the original order is preserved.
  - You will need to choose whether you will describe item in detail as part of that file description, whether you might break up the file into separate items, or whether you opt to describe the seals as a group within the file level catalogue record.

- This choice will depend on in-house practice in how the documents/seals have been catalogued in the past.
- It is possible to catalogue at bundle/file level first, and then to return and add more detail by creating item level descriptions at a point in the future when time permits.
- If in doubt here, refer to inhouse style guidelines or ask an archivist for further assistance.

## Section B: Recording the seal(s)

\*Words in italics can be found in the Glossary\*

This Section of the Guidelines should be used in conjunction with the Flowchart (Section D below) which gives a handy visual representation of the workflow which you need to follow here.

See also the Supplementary Information and the Appendices (Motif key words and sample images and the Timeline).

N.B. Warwickshire County Record Office have developed an Excel spreadsheet template for cataloguing seals. They are happy to send this template out on request.

### 1. Are there any seals attached to / associated with the document?

- Yes. See 2.
- No. Move onto the next document. If there are conservation or other issues with the document, remember to flag this up to the appropriate member of staff in the approved method at your institution.
- Missing. Record as 'Seal(s) now lost' if there is clear evidence that the document was once sealed, e.g. tags with traces of wax.

### 2. How many seals are there?

- If there is only one seal, follow steps 3 onwards.
- Remember to check the back of the wax on *pendent seals*, in case there is an impression of another matrix there. If extant, it will also need to be recorded.
- Two or more: Each seal should be recorded as a separate item.
- More than one wax attached to a document should be numbered as Seal / Position 1, Seal / Position 2 etc. It is usual to number from the left to the right if each wax is on a separate *tag* or *cord*, or from top to bottom if each is on a separate *tongue* (see paragraph 3 for forms of attachment). If there is more than one wax on a *tag* or *cords*, these should be numbered from the top down before moving onto the next tag / cords to continue the numbering sequence. For tongues, number from left to right before continuing the sequence on the next tongue down. See Figs. 2.2.a-c.

- Impressions of two or more *matrices* on a single piece of wax should be identified as Seal 1.a and Seal 1.b, or Seal 1 front and Seal 1 back. Impressions from true double-sided *matrices* where these are already known to have existed (such as the Great Seal and some town seals) should be described as 'obverse' and 'reverse' or 'front' and 'back'. See Figs. 2.2.d-e.

- Sometimes a lump of wax will be blank, or it will have something other than a *matrix* (e.g. non-seal ring, or leaf) impressed in it. Such lumps of wax are best labelled in the manner of a conventional seal impression, with a description or note provided to explain the situation.

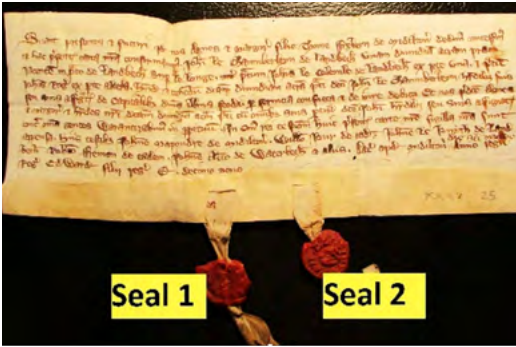


Fig. 2.2.a



Fig. 2.2.b



Fig. 2.2.c



Fig. 2.2.d Front / obverse of the Great Seal (2nd Great Seal of Richard II (r. 1377-99))



Fig. 2.2.e Back / reverse of the Great Seal

### 3. Form of attachment?

- *Applied*. The wax / other material supporting the *matrix* impression is attached directly onto the face of the document or onto a ribbon or piece of parchment / paper threaded through the face of the document (but not suspended from it). See Fig. 3.a.
- *Cords*. Generic term for woven or braided material used to attach wax to documents. Cords are often made from silk. Cords can often be faded so be aware that the current colour may be different from the original colour. Sometimes the colours of the cords relate to the seal owner, e.g. red and gold for the Clare family or green and

cream for the Tudor Great Seal. There currently is no evidence that such practices were widespread. Noting the colour(s) of cords and laces is optional, and best recorded in the “Notes” field. See Fig. 3.b.

- *Tag*. A thin strip of parchment threaded through a cut in the foot of the document used to attach wax for sealing. See Fig. 3.c.
- *Tongue*. A thin strip cut across most of the foot of the document used to attach wax for sealing. See Fig. 3.d.
- If seal(s) are associated with the document but have since become detached, record this as ‘Detached seal(s)’.

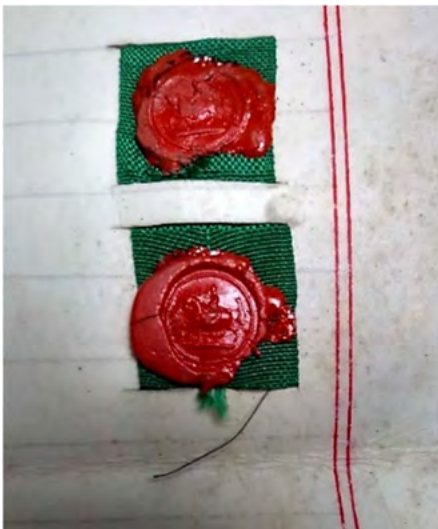


Fig. 3.a



Fig. 3.b



Fig. 3.c

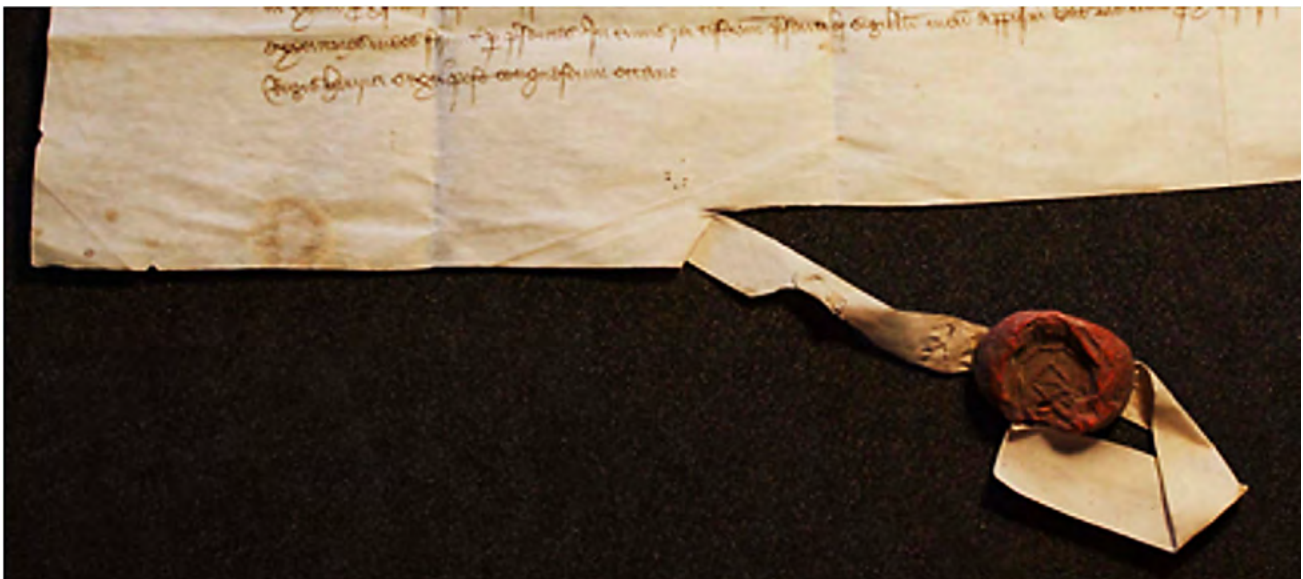


Fig. 3.d

#### 4. Material?

- Wax. This should be used for all medieval seals except those made of metal. Some post-medieval impressions will also be made in wax. See Section F below.
- Shellac. Most impressions from the later 17th century onwards were made into shellac. See Section F below and the Timeline.
- Metal. Use for impressions made into lead or engraved onto a gold / silver disc which is attached to a document. Papal *bullae* (seals issued by the Papal Chancery in Rome) were invariably made of lead, but otherwise metal is an unusual support for British and Irish seals. See Section F below.
- Paper / wafer. This will predominantly be for raised stamp seal impressions.
- Uncertain. Use this term if you are unsure what the support material is, especially if dealing with 20th century pendent impressions. See Section F below.

#### 5. Colour?

This is best kept as basic as possible, e.g., green, red etc, although the exact terminology and categorisation should be agreed locally when cataloguing begins. Wax without obvious pigment should be recorded as

'Uncoloured', with 'White' reserved for wax which has been deliberately coloured as such. Only comment further if two colours are used or there is something unusual about the colour. A drop-box of standard colours with other comments in a "Notes" field or a standard list are recommended, in order to control the vocabulary used and to make this as consistent as possible. For more information on the colour of seal impressions, see Section G.

#### 6. Condition of the impression from the matrix?

It is suggested that a sliding scale of 1-5 is used for consistency, e.g. 1 = No damage, and 5 = Fragment only. If a seal is classified as in condition 5, and if the shape cannot be discerned, recording of the seal can stop at this point. If deemed useful, a separate scale could indicate wear to the impression specifically, although in many cases a badly damaged impression will also be extremely worn. The identification and categorisation of damage to the seal impression should be established locally at the beginning of a cataloguing project.

A differentiation between damage to the seal impression and damage to the rest of the wax can sometimes be helpful, especially in relation to future conservation.

### Examples of what might constitute points on the scale



1: No damage



2: Some minor damage



3: Moderate damage



4: Badly damaged



5: Fragment only

**7. Shape of the impression from the matrix?**

This should be recorded as clearly, consistently and concisely as possible. This can usually be limited to the following options: round, pointed oval (sometimes called 'vesica'), rounded oval, square, polygonal (usually hexagonal or octagonal), shield-shaped (also called 'scutiform'), lozenge ('diamond'), other, uncertain. See Section G. If no further details of the impression from the matrix can be discerned, stop cataloguing at this point.

**8. Size of the impression from the matrix?**

Measurements should be given in millimetres.

- Measure the diameter for round seals. For all other shapes, measure the vertical measurement first, and then the horizontal measurement next, and indicate this clearly.
- If you are uncertain of where the top of the impression is, record the largest measurement first.
- Unless there is something particularly unusual about the lump of wax or other material e.g. if it is particularly thick, only measurements for the actual impression from the matrix are usually necessary, although check your in-house standard for this.
- The lugs (bits of metal with a pin or hole for a pin which stick out from the plates of a double-sided matrix) should not be included as part of the measurement.

**9. Description of impression from the matrix.**

\*Full examples of common motif types and sample images are available in Appendix One.\*

**Motif.** This is the image or symbol which forms the centre piece of the impression.

- Is the motif visible? Record the principal motif keyword or phrase. These keywords/phrases should be established before recording takes place, as it is important to use controlled vocabulary for consistency in cataloguing. Add new keywords if necessary following established workflows. Appendix One gives some examples for suggestions, but this list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.
- 'Device' can be used as a generic term where the central motif is uncertain.
- See Section G for further details on motifs.
- \*OPTIONAL\* Details of motif. Only provide details if this has been agreed as a compulsory element of description and if the cataloguer feels confident to do so.
- Is the motif illegible? If a motif is apparent but no details can be discerned, record as Motif illegible or Motif damaged etc.

**Legend.** This is the text which accompanies a motif, and it is usually placed around the outside of the image field.

- Is the legend visible? Yes, legend is present.
  - Is the legend legible?
    - Yes. Record as Legend extant. This can be used if the cataloguer can see that there are letters but cannot read the letterforms and / or cannot understand the language used.
    - No. Record as Legend extant but illegible.
- 1. \*OPTIONAL\* Text of the legend. Include this only if your catalogue is very detailed. See Section G for further advice.
- No, there is no legend. Record as No legend (but be certain that this is an intended feature, rather than the result of damage and illegibility).

**10. Notes**

Notes can be used to record any useful additional information about the seal or document, such as the presence of skippets, contemporary fabric wrapping or organic material (e.g. leaves, wool) embedded in or applied to the surface of seals, and finger / handprints on the surface of wax. Notes may also be used to flag-up conservation issues or concerns. This is an extra field to use in your cataloguing if you do not usually use this.

## Section C: Elements of a seal and some example descriptions

### Standard elements of the face of a seal (as impressed in wax)



- Cross at the start of legend
- Legend running clockwise around the edge
- Motif area
- Central motif (a stylized lily in this case)

**Motifs** are the image shown in the centre of the impression. These are often 'framed' by the legend-band, which can be ornate, and from the early 13th century onwards human figures (especially images of saints) may be beneath a canopy or within a niche, or both. Religious figures are sometimes accompanied by the image of a person in prayer (a 'suppliant figure'), and these may be divided from the principal image.



Although chipped and worn, it is still possible to identify a seated figure here within an ornate canopied niche with a suppliant figure in a compartment below on this 15th century seal impression

The legend is the text which encircles the motif. Most legends have a small cross, star or other device to mark the starting point of the text. This generally is at the top of the motif, but legends can begin elsewhere in relation to the main image.

Legends generally fall into two main categories: those which name the individual, office or institution represented by the seal, and those with 'anonymous' texts, often a common phrase or religious invocation. Apart from the Great Seal, most seals with name legends begin *Sigillum* (seal of), often abbreviated to *Sig.* / *Sigill'* / *S'*



- Cross indicating the legend start point
- SIGILL' (abbreviation of *Sigillum* seal of)
- Name of seal owner, in this instance *MATILDIS* (Matilda)
- Name legends of have connector such as *Fil'* (abbreviation for 'son of') In this instance the connector is *DE* (of), indicating a toponym.

### Examples of basic and more detailed descriptions, using the Guidelines in Section B above

NB remember to include the Reference Number at all times, although these are not given in this examples.

#### Example 1.

Information from document (existing catalogue record):  
Richard de Longeleys, vicar of Cheylmarshe to John Ronthale of Ludlow and Margaret his wife. Ludlow, Monday before feast of St Luke the Evangelist  
4 Rich II (1380)



#### Basic seal description

Red wax on tag, some minor damage. Rounded oval, 26x20mm.  
Motif keyword: standing figure. Legend.

#### Detailed seal description

Red wax on tag, minor damage to bottom of seal. Rounded oval, 26x20mm.  
Motif: Beneath an architectural canopy, Virgin and Child standing facing half right, to right a kneeling suppliant man (?in clerical dress) facing left with three trefoil flowers on stems above his hands.  
Legend: MATER DEI [ . . ]ERERE MEI

#### Example 2.

Information from document (existing catalogue record):  
John son of Geoffrey de Elynton to Sir Walter Chamberlain. Ramsey, eve of St Gregory, 40 Henry III (1256)



#### Basic seal description

Green wax on tag. Round, 34mm.

Motif keyword: Radial. Legend.

#### Detailed seal description

Green wax on tag. Round, 34mm.  
Motif: Cross paty with rays in the angles.  
Legend: + S' IOH'IS.BERE xxx  
Notes: Name on seal not the same as that in document.  
Handprints on back of wax.

### Examples of how seals have been described in existing catalogues

#### 1.

Attachment Type Tag; Colour of Wax brown; Condition of Wax Intact; Shape Pointed Oval; Vertical Size (mm) 32; Horizontal Size (mm) 21. Design description: Radial device comprised of four branches which divide the impression into quarters. In each quarter is a star. Legend: + S'IOH' . FIL'THOM. DEPARIS' (Lincolnshire Archives Dij/75/1/8)  
<https://www.imprintseals.org/document/6292>

#### 2.

Seal: a bird bearing a branch (East Riding Archives, DDCC/45/10)  
<https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=zDDCC%2f45%2f10&pos=51>

#### 3.

Seal Design: ?bearded figure ?standing holding a key in the right hand and a sword in the left on the left and a bearded figure ?standing holding a sword in the right hand and a book in the left on the right, both facing half-inwards, Size: 27 mm, Shape: round, Colour: dark green, Legend: [.]RICAR[.]P'.CL'I|CI., Personal.  
Material: Wax.  
Attachment: On tongue.  
(TNA, DL 25/1380/1098)  
<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C16100105>

#### 4.

Seal (Oval, brown wax): a single standing figure, legend illegible' (Shropshire Archives, 103/1/5/4)  
[https://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCA\\_X103\\_1\\_5\\_1\\_1\\_4](https://www.shropshirearchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/CCA_X103_1_5_1_1_4)

#### 5.

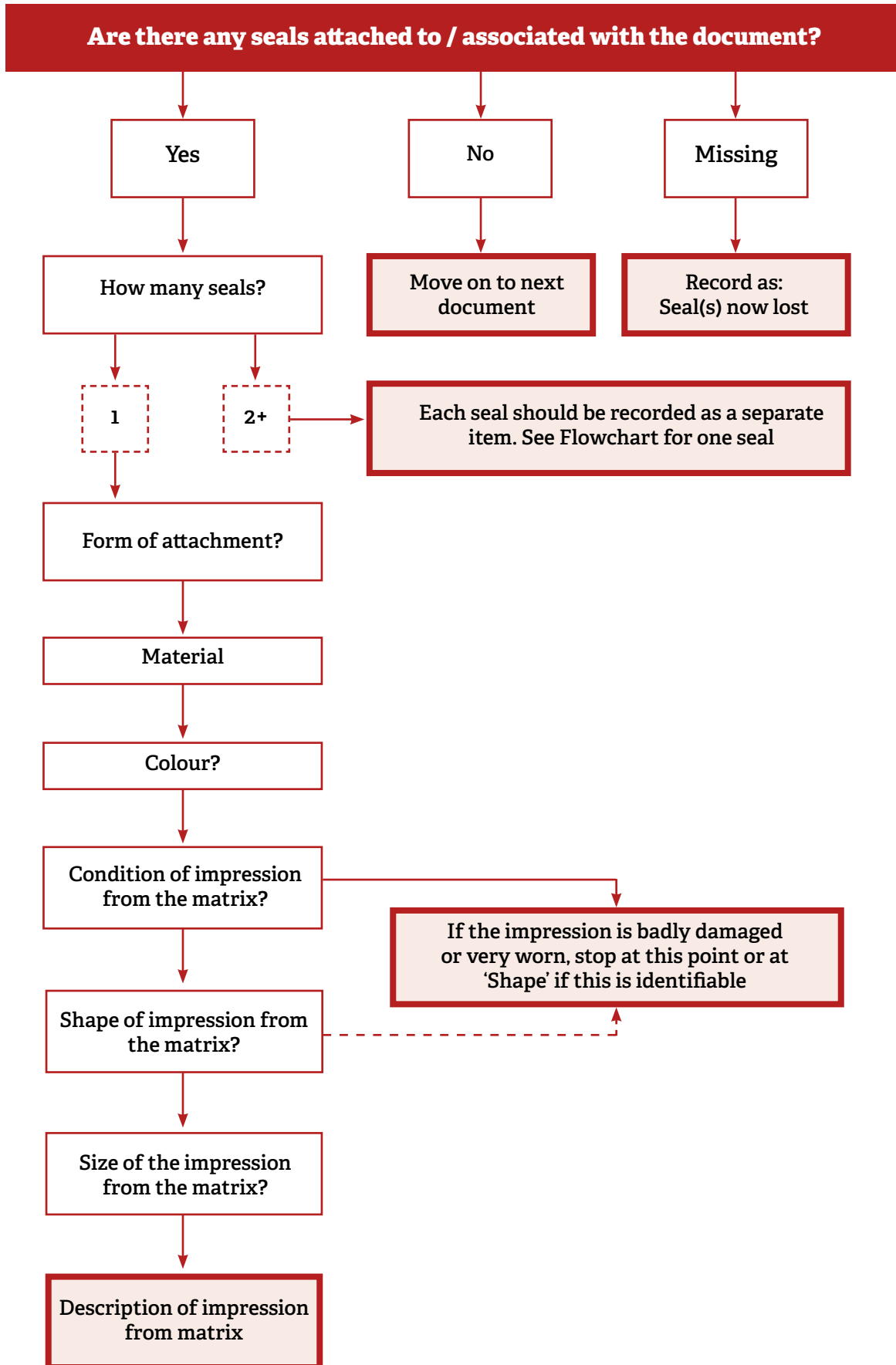
Fragment of black wax armorial seal with inscription (Devon Heritage Centre, 136M/T/3)  
<https://devon-cat.swheritage.org.uk/records/136M/T/3>

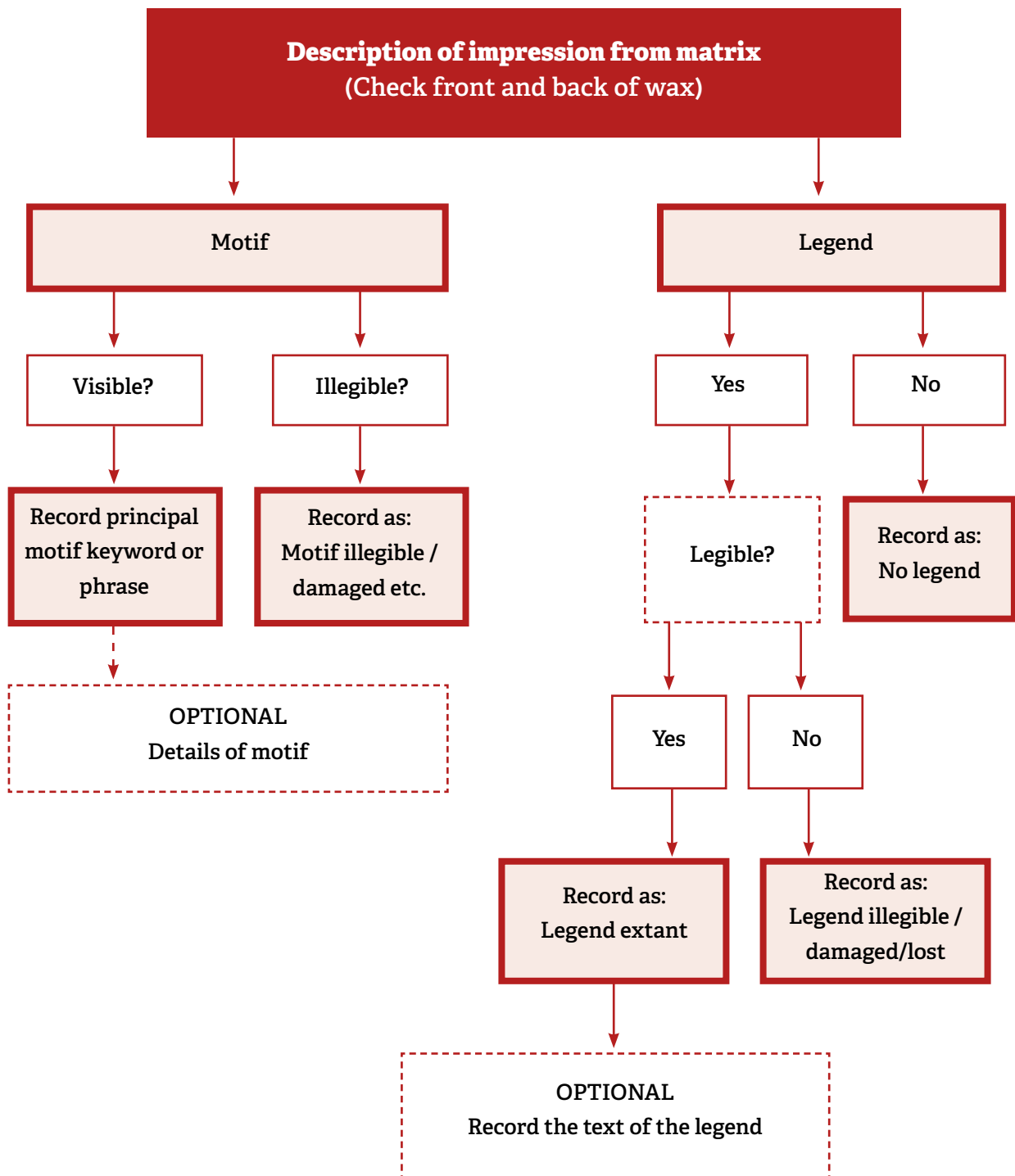
#### 6.

Seal pendent; brown wax; initial 'R.' (Bangor University Archives, MOST/1094)  
<http://calmview.bangor.ac.uk/>



**Section D:**  
**Flowchart for recording seals**





**NOTES**

Use Notes to record useful additional information about the seal or the document, including any contemporary fabric wrapping, conservation issues, presence of fingerprints on wax etc.

## Section E: Photographing seals and sealed documents

It is very useful to take images of the seal and document which you are describing. This approach has many benefits:

- You are creating a visual record of its current physical condition and appearance which will be valuable in the future, particularly if the seal's condition worsens and the impression defaces over time.
- You can attach the image to the catalogue record, which can then be accessed via online catalogues or sent to researchers. This means that researchers who cannot visit the seal itself can access the image surrogate and/or can make a decision about whether to make a trip to see it in person.
- You can send the digital image to third parties who may be able to advise on the condition/treatment or *motif/legend* of the seal, without needing to visit in person.
- You can send the digital image to interested parties without needing to retrieve the physical item to make the image again.
- You can print out the picture and store it with the document or with collection documentation – this is then useful as a visual aid/surrogate if looking through a large collection for particular examples for outreach or education.

### Tips for imaging

1. Always check with a conservator or archivist before photographing sealed documents.
2. Pay special attention to how the document and seal are being handled and supported during the process, including production, image capture and retrieval.
3. When photographing the seal itself, make sure that the document is stable and secure.
4. Photographs should be taken of the front and back of the entire sealed instrument when a seal impression is still attached, ensuring that the form of attachment for pendent seals is clearly in view.
5. Include a scale rule in at least one photograph of the seal(s).
6. It is useful to display a colour chart in the image (NB a new banknote can be substituted if no colour chart is available).
7. Avoid using flash photography for seals. The strong light and heat can cause possible damage to the seal, or can speed up fading of the ink used on the original document. Note that *sealing wax* reflects flashlights in an unhelpful manner. Arrange alternative lighting sources if needed.

8. Lighting is crucial! These are images of the same seal. The image on at the top was photographed with the ambient lighting available in the reading room. The image at the bottom was photographed with sharply angled lighting.



9. Lighting is often used from the top left or from above in digitisation work. Be aware that this convention of lighting does not always work when photographing seals, and worn or complex impressions may require images with lighting from several different angles.
10. Direct overhead lighting and diffused lights are rarely suitable for imaging seal impressions, because they 'flatten' the appearance of the surface. Angled / raked lighting is best, and it is often necessary to move the light-source around to create shadows and enable details of the impression to be seen clearly.
11. If you don't have other light sources available, using natural daylight by placing the objects on a windowsill with no overhead shadows can work very well.
12. If available, use cold lights (ones that do not get hot when left on for a long time). If using standard lights, do not leave the sealed document under these for any longer than is absolutely necessary.
13. If you are using a camera stand, ensure that the camera is attached very securely to it before placing the seal / sealed document underneath it. If using a camera by hand, avoid holding the camera in one hand and adjusting the document / seal with the other. Dropping a camera on any archival document is potentially serious, but dropping a heavy camera onto a fragile wax seal could completely destroy it!
14. Seal *matrices* should be photographed from all angles to show the handle / back of the *matrix*, as well as the engraved face.
15. Remember that seals are three-dimensional objects, so try to capture this in the digitisation process.
16. If available, some form of 3D imaging might be appropriate, especially for 'star items' which are very popular with users or are particularly significant to your institution. Lazar 3D imaging can work well for *matrices*, but 'photographic' 3D imaging such as RTI is usually best for seals of all kinds.
17. Consider what sort of images you wish to capture e.g. high and/or low resolution. Keep the image files carefully organised through the image capture process, or you will lose track of which images belong to which seal(s).
18. Ensure that image files are labelled clearly and appropriately and remember to include appropriately detailed metadata in images that might go online (NB always include the Reference Number or it can take a long time to identify unreferenced seals which third parties find online and then ask you to identify).
19. Tagging image file metadata with the *motif* keywords used for cataloguing is also a very useful practice to include when linking up the catalogue description and any digitised images.



# Supplementary Information

(Words in italics can be found in the Glossary)

## Section F: An introduction to seals and sealing practices

### 1. What is a seal?

In terms of the physical objects, a 'seal' can take one of three forms:

- a) A *matrix* (pl. *matrices*) is an object made from a hard material into which an image and/or words has been engraved and / or cast, in reverse so that the *impression* displays the correct way around once it is impressed into the wax and attached to a document as a seal. The terms 'die' and 'stamp' are sometimes also used for a matrix.
  - i. From the later 18thth century onwards, the *raised stamp matrix* has become common. This consists of two plates which trap paper or parchment between them to create a low-relief impression.\*
- b) An *impression* made by a matrix into soft material which then hardens to retain the imprint. The vast majority of seals encountered in an archival context are impressions.
- c) A *cast* made from an impression; a modern impression taken from a historic matrix sometimes is also referred to as a 'cast'. Strictly speaking, casts are not seals in their own right, but are instead replicas of seals.

**\* Note!** Duty stamps were introduced in 1694 and in their early forms can sometimes be mistaken for papered wafer or raised-stamp seals. However, they are NOT seals and should not be recorded as such. They generally can be recognised by their placement on the side(s) rather than foot of a document and by the ink stamp which usually accompanies them; those of the 18th century invariably are embossed on blue paper with a metal foil underlay.



18th century duty stamp

### 2. How were seals used?

The use of a *matrix* to create an impression in soft material that hardens to retain the imprint dates back at least 7000 years and is found in most societies throughout history. Seals were widely used in Roman Britain; there is scant evidence for their use in the early medieval period, with documentary sealing for validation and authentication seemingly reintroduced in the 11th century. For Ireland, evidence of sealing is extremely limited until the mid-13th century, after which it follows similar patterns to that found in Britain.

Signatures started to replace seals as the key means of identification and validation in the 15th century, but seals continue to be used for validation and as seals of *closure* to the present day.

In a heritage context, you will usually encounter two principal uses for seals:

- a) **Seals of closure.** These are impressions of a *matrix* made into clay, wax, shellac, or an artificial material, which has been placed across some form of access, so that any attempt to open the sealed document or object damages or breaks the seal and is obvious to the custodian or recipient of the sealed item. Seals of closure can be used to secure documents, wrappers, containers of various kinds, parcels, doors, and covers / hatches.
- b) **Seals of validation** and authentication are impressions of *matrices* made into material which is attached to a document with the express purpose of remaining intact and as permanent proof that the *written instrument* has been validated and authenticated by one or more of the parties involved. The range of documents validated under seal is considerable and depends upon date and regional variations in practice. From the late 12th to early 16th centuries, virtually all royal grants and agreements, and documents related to free land transactions in places that operated under English common law, were authenticated by sealing. Most wills and testaments and a host of ecclesiastical documents, along with more ephemeral material such as bonds and apprentice indentures were also sealed. Royal grants and licences, a range of legal, financial, corporate, and ecclesiastical documents, and certificates of various kinds continued to be issued under seal until the early 21st century, and some still require seals of validation and authentication.

See the Timeline in Appendix 2 below for more details about what types of seal were using when and where.

### 3. The physical process of sealing

#### The materials

- a) **Matrices.** In Britain and Ireland, most matrices were and are made of base-metal, but precious metals are also employed. Matrices can alternatively be made of stone, bone, ivory, and wood. Some matrices are created by placing an engraved stone in a metal mount; regardless of the type of stone involved or its provenance, these are usually called gems or ancient gems in academic literature and catalogues.
- Matrices are usually either flat (sometimes called *flat-stamp*) or *pedestal* (also called 'chess-piece' or 'tall-handle') in form. *Fob seals* are a form of *pedestal matrix*. Raised stamp seal presses generally used for creating an impression direct into the paper or parchment support and generally are quite large.
  - *Signet rings* are a sub-class of *matrix*; the word 'signet' actually just denotes a small seal. If the image / text on the bezel of a ring is engraved in reverse or into the surface rather than proud of the surface, a ring is usually designated as a seal *matrix* or 'signet ring'.
  - *Bullatorian* are tongs with the seal image /text engraved on either head and were used to impress metal discs attached to document. They principally were used in the Byzantine Empire and by the Papacy.



Flat-stamp matrix



Pedestal matrix





Fob matrix



Raised stamp seal press

- b) Impressions.** In medieval Britain, the material was almost always *sealing wax*. From the late 16th century onwards, *shellac* became the most common material, and in modern times a range of other materials have been used.
- **True sealing wax** is made from beeswax, often with pigment and / or tree resin added, probably to make the wax more durable. Pigments can be inorganic (principally mercury (II) sulphide or lead (II, IV) oxide for shades of red / orange; copper (II) acetate for greens) or organic. Uncoloured wax was used throughout the Middle Ages, but it became far less common in the 15th century. Red / orange seems to have been introduced in the 12th century, and green was the most common wax colour in the 13th century. There is some evidence of systematic use of different colours in the medieval English royal government, but apart from wax for the Great Seal, there currently is little evidence to suggest any formal significance for the colour of wax. [see Further Reading, Chaplais, *English Royal Documents*].

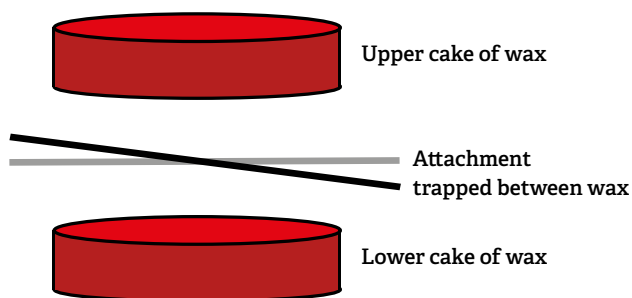
- **Shellac** is the resinous secretion of the insect *Tachardia lacca*, native to South-East Asia. This is what most people think of as 'sealing wax' and is usually supplied as a stick (sometimes with a wick) or small pellets. Shellac can be dyed a variety of colours, but red is most common, especially on legal documents.
- **Metal.** Lead was used as the support material for impressions of the papal seal (*bullae*) from at least the 7th century; most extant Byzantine seal impressions are also made into lead. A handful of gold 'seals' are attached to western European medieval documents, although most were in fact engraved as one-offs rather than being impressed by a *matrix*.
- **Other materials** can be used as the support for impressions from *matrices*. Paper and parchment can be directly embossed with a raised stamp *matrix*; a coloured piece of paper is sometimes fixed over the area to be sealed to make these impressions more visible. From the 17th century onwards, *wafer seals* appear; these can be *applied* or *pendent*. In the 19th–21st centuries a range of artificial compounds have been used as the support for impressions, including *gutta percha*, Bakelite, and modern plastics.



Pendent papered wafer seal from raised-stamp matrix

### Attachment to objects and documents (principally 12th – 20th century)

- d) **Seals of closure** can be formed by impressing a matrix into the support material which is either directly attached to the surface of the item to be sealed or to a thread, cord, chain or wrapping which secures the item.
- e) **Seals of validation and authentication**, here two principal methods have been employed:
- **Applied.** This is where the support for the impression is attached directly to the surface of the document or to a ribbon or piece of parchment / paper threaded through the face of the document. In Britain and Ireland, *applied* seals of validation are rare before the 16th century.
  - **Pendent.** This is where the support for the impression is affixed to the document by a *cord, tag, or tongue*. When using true *sealing wax*, prepared cakes of wax are warmed-up immediately prior to impressing the *matrix* so that they are malleable. The soft cakes are then either formed into a disc that encloses the attachment, or one disc is pressed into the matrix, the attachment laid across this, and the other cake moulded over the top to trap the *tag, tongue or cord*. The vast majority of pendent seals made of wax have an impression on only one side, but this form enables the use of a *double-sided matrix* or the impressing of two separate *matrices* on different sides. Pendent seals were the dominant form in Britain and Ireland from the 12th to the early 16th centuries.



The basic method of attaching true sealing wax to a *cord, tag or tongue* for a *pendent seal*

### 4. The practice of sealing in a documentary context

In pre-modern Britain and Ireland, impressing a matrix as a seal of validation and authentication was an important stage in confirming that a deed or other document was a true record. Retaining the seal impression with the document was also extremely important, as without its seal, or with a seal impression damaged beyond recognition, a document of any kind could be deemed invalid as proof. In addition to the impression of the matrix in its support (and in some cases the nature of that support: see Glossary and Further Reading), crucial information related to seals is usually found in the written instrument attached to it.

- a) **Witnesses to sealing.** *Seals of closure* can be applied in private or before witnesses, depending on the context. *Seals of validation and authentication* are created before witnesses, usually as part of a legal, administrative, financial or ceremonial process. From the 12th to the 16th centuries, sealing before a range of witnesses was crucial, and their names are usually recorded in the document. In the post-medieval period witnesses might be limited to the relevant administrators, lawyers or officials and are not always recorded.
- b) **The sigillant(s).** In addition to witnesses, the names of the parties involved invariably appear near the start of the document and give an indication of who was likely to have impressed their matrix. From the mid-12th century onwards, it was also usual to record the sigillant in a separate sealing clause near the end. The name of the sigillant (the individual or institution doing the sealing) was sometimes written on the tag or tongue, or the turn-up at the foot of the document; when signatures became more common, they were usually inscribed near the seal used by that sigillant.
- The most common form of the medieval sealing clause (if only one sigillant) was *In cuius rei testimonium presenti carte sigillum meum apposui* ('In witness of which thing I have put my seal to this present charter'). Other formulae are also found, especially in the 12th and early 13th centuries.
- c) **Sigillants** not using their own matrix. In some instances, a sigillant did not have a seal matrix of their own, did not have their matrix with the, or for some reason needed additional corroboration to their sealing. In the 12th and 13th centuries such instances were usually recorded, but from at least the early 14th century, the borrowing of another person's matrix became more common and was not always noted in the document. If this is suspected, it is best to refer to a 'seal user' rather than 'seal owner' when naming the individual who is assumed to have impressed the matrix.



### 5. Contemporary efforts to preserve seals

It was important to keep *seals of validation and authentication* intact and housed with their parent document. As a result, people in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period went to considerable lengths to preserve seals, sometimes with unforeseen and unfortunate consequences (see 2.2). The most common means of storage was simply to ensure that the wax disc with the impression of the matrix was housed within the folded document, a practice that sometimes is obscured by the opening and flattening of documents in modern archives. As the document itself was intended to be stored folded this way, tucking the seal into those folds would keep the seal safe to some extent from damage and wear.

- 1) **Bags** and wrappings were widely used to protect pendent seals, and sometimes to add to the visual impact of an important document. Fabric (most often linen, sometimes silk) and wool was sometimes wrapped around the pendent disc of wax, and fabric or soft leather was occasionally sewn as a pouch around the wax; more commonly, a removable bag of cloth bag was created [see Further Reading].
- 2) **Skippets** are metal containers for the wax disk of a *pendent seal*, used only for the most important documents. Skippets seem to first have been used in the 15th and unfortunately continued in use well into the late 19th century. There are significant preservation concerns related to skippets, such as damage to the wax if the case doesn't fit well, difficulties in opening/closing the skippet, or through corrosion of the metal itself. Seals stored within skippets often fragment significantly, which can be discerned by gently shaking the skippet – if this happens, seek conservation help and do not attempt to open the skippet yourself.
- 3) **Boxes** were sometimes designed to store a rolled-up document with a *pendent seal*, made of wood or metal and sometimes with an additional lock. These generally are restricted to the 16th – 19th centuries [see Further Reading]. This practice is often preserved for the most important type of documents e.g. foundation charters, as it offered an extra layer of protection from fire and from environmental conditions. Often documents previously stored in boxes have since been rehoused, but do preserve any surviving original boxes as they constitute an important part of the history of that particular document and of recordkeeping practices within that particular archival institution – be sure to label these appropriately so you can keep track of their original contents, especially if Reference Numbers have since changed.



Seal bag with bottom left unstitched so the seal could be inspected



Skippet with lid open

## Section G: Tips and suggestions for identification and recording

(Words in italics can be found in the Glossary)

### Identifying seals

A vast array of images appears on seals, and the text also varies a great deal. Wear or other damage to the face of a *matrix*, the impression in wax or other material, and to *casts*, complicates matters further.

- However, at different times certain *motifs* were more common than others, and the combination of image and text on many royal and governmental, official and corporate seals, and seals of office, was fairly standard for long periods of history, making identification easier.
  - The size of a seal can also be instructive, for in most periods the larger the seal, the more likely it was to represent an important individual, office or institution (although there are some significant exceptions to this).
  - It is also important to remember that seals, in whatever form, are three dimensional objects and so lighting is often crucial for revealing details of the *motif* and text (See Section B.4 for advice on photography)
  - For assistance with identification for the most common pre-modern types of *motifs* and suggested nomenclature, please see Appendix 1.
  - The Timeline also contains lots of useful of what was typical during which period.
- 1) **Information from the document.** As noted in Section A, the name(s) of the sigillant(s) is usually recorded in the document's sealing clause. This can help a great deal with identifying motifs and text on the seals themselves.
  - 2) **Shape.** As noted in Section B (p15), the vast majority of seals are either round, oval (rounded or pointed), square or polygonal (hexagonal and octagonal more most common). However, other shapes occur, especially in the post-medieval period.
    - a) Virtually all royal and governmental seals are round, as are the seals of many secular corporations although monastic and some early episcopal seals are also round. For personal seals, the shape is often dictated by the motif, so most seals with the image of a figure mounted on a horse are round.
    - b) It is sometimes suggested that pointed oval (also known as 'vesica') seals are an indicator of an ecclesiastical or female owner, but plenty of laymen and secular institutions also employed this shape. The pointed oval did however become the standard shape for episcopal seals from the mid-12th-19th centuries.
  - 3) **Motifs.** As noted in Section B (pp16-17), most seals from pre-modern Britain and Ireland have a central motif (in the secondary literature, this is sometimes called the 'design'), often surrounded by text (the 'legend'). From the later 15th century onwards, seals with only a central motif (often a letter or letters) and no legend become more common for individuals.
    - a) A motif can be a single, simple, image such as a stylised flower or animal, but can be composed of several different visual motifs or a narrative scene.
    - b) For medieval seals in particular, expect almost anything as a motif!
    - c) It is important to remember that when recording seals, it is not necessary to be able to interpret the *motif*, just to identify the key elements of an image.
    - d) Even the most general of descriptions (e.g. radial device, flower, animal) are better than none at all - and remember that even published catalogues by 'experts' often include question marks!
    - e) *Royal and governmental seals* have fairly standard *motifs*, although generally became more elaborate and larger during the later Middle Ages and through the 16th–19th centuries.
      - From the 1040s in England and the late 11th century in Scotland, the *Great Seal* of the ruling monarch has been *double-sided* and usually shows the figure of the monarch (a representation rather than a portrait until the 16th century) seated in majesty on one side and seated on a horse on the other side. There are some exceptions to this pattern, most notably during the 17th century Commonwealth period when a map of Britain and depiction of Parliament in session replaced the traditional images.
      - Seals of departments of government and *deputed* royal seals can be either single or double-sided, but these are usually quite easy to identify through the use of royal heraldry or *motifs* similar to those found on the Great Seal.
      - Royal and government seals are among the most widely reproduced and intensively studied, which also assists with identification [see Further Reading].
    - f) *Official seals* were and still are used by a host of secular and religious institutions and organisations.
      - Seals of office are sometimes considered to be a sub-set of official seals in existing catalogues and supporting literature. The types of *motifs* on official seals and seals of office generally are quite standard and are drawn from a limited range of images, depending on period and location. They are also often quite easy to identify: for example the figure of a bishop for an episcopal seal, the image of town walls or a townscape for an urban corporate seal.
      - It should however be remembered that, before the Reformation, secular institutions and

corporate bodies not infrequently used images of saints or religious scenes on their seals, and that ecclesiastical institutions sometimes used images of buildings on theirs, such as the relevant cathedral for a chapter seal.

- In the post-medieval period, official seals most often have a *motif* related to the institution / organisation / office, such as a barge for a canal company or schoolmaster and pupils for a school. An institutional logo or crest is also a common choice. Just like medieval seals, caution must however sometimes be exercised; the goddesses Minerva and Cybele appear on the 18th century seal of the British Museum, while the 19th century seal of the University of Wales depicts a mountain and the sea.
- g) *Personal seals*. This is by far the largest and most diverse category of seals, but even so, depending on date and location, there are some useful clues to identification.
  - The seals of the aristocracy (nobility and knights) and gentry are, in the main, the most formulaic. From the late 11th to later 13th centuries, men of the high nobility mainly used seals with the image of a man on horseback (the *equestrian figure*).
    - Heraldic devices were introduced from the early 12th century, and eventually replaced the equestrian figure on the seals of the vast majority of aristocratic and gentry men.
    - Noble women's seals followed a similar pattern, with the image of a finely-dressed woman first incorporating and then often being replaced by heraldic devices in the 12th–14th centuries.
    - The gentry emerge as a social stratum at the time heraldry was becoming widely adopted, and heraldic devices are the most common seal motif for men and women of this status.
  - Merchants and artisans used a very wide array of seal *motifs*. However, if you see an image of a tool, implement or object associated with a specific occupation or type of work, it may well be that the seal-owner was engaged in this activity. A major caveat however, especially from the late 13th century onwards, is that such *motifs* could be associated with the byname or family name of the seal-owner (thus a pair of scissors on the seal of John Tailor could be a canting device - a visual pun - rather than a clear indication that John was indeed a tailor by occupation). Devices made up of a series of lines and / or circles, often including something similar to the numeral 4, generally are known as *merchant marks*, although artisans such as carpenters and masons also used similar marks. The use of such a mark the owner was a trader or craftsman of some kind; they are mainly found from the late 13th to early 17th centuries.

- Seals of clergy, when intended principally for use in a personal rather than official capacity, are often indistinguishable from those of their secular peers. From the 12th to 16th centuries, however, the image of a head with a tonsure (the 'doughnut-ring' haircut that leaves the crown of the head bare) is a good indicator that the owner of the *matrix* was in Holy Orders.
- Seals of non-aristocratic men and women, and indeed some matrices owned by the nobility, display a bewildering array of *motifs*, but there were patterns in common types of images:
  - Radial devices and stylised lilies, followed by birds and crescents, appear from current research to have been the most common types of *motifs* in the 12th and 13th centuries, for example.
  - Some *motifs* appear to have come into and then dropped out of fashion, which can assist with rough dating as well as identification. The image of a hare riding on the back of a dog, often blowing a hunting horn, seems largely to be restricted to the very late 13th through to the later 14th century, for example.
  - Images of saint and other religious *motifs* are found on a number of personal seals, including those owned and used by laymen and women. In the post-medieval period, religious imagery was sometimes used to express confessional affiliation, but is far less common.
- During the later 18th and into the 19th century, a number of seal-makers produced catalogues advertising standardised types of images that could be ordered and potentially individualised with an accompanying text. Such motifs included birds, animals, flowers; symbolic devices such as clasped hands for friendship or a heart for love and fidelity; and portraits of military heroes or famous writers.

4) *Legend / Text on seals*. Most medieval and the majority of post-medieval seals have text accompanying the motif, technically known as the seal legend, as noted in Section B, p17.

- a) The legend is usually placed around the edge of a central image, and as a result the text is prone to wear-and-tear. To add to the complications, words on medieval seals are often highly abbreviated, and letters were occasionally engraved on *matrices* in 'positive', resulting in them appearing back-to-front on impressions.
- b) Those seals with a name legend almost always start with the word *Sigillum* ('seal of'), but this frequently is abbreviated to *Sigill'* or just *S*.
- Common first names are also frequently abbreviated, as are placenames; in such cases, look at the document where they are often written in full.

- A small cross, star or other mark often indicates the starting point of the legend on a medieval seal, but this becomes less common in 15th century.
  - c) The text on medieval seals from Britain and Ireland is predominantly written in Latin, but from the 13th century English and French were also used. Welsh, Scottish and Irish name-forms and link-words (e.g. for Welsh *ab*, *mab*) were used, but at the time of writing these Guidelines, no full text legends in Irish, Manx, Scots Gaelic or Welsh have been identified for the medieval period, although all these languages appear on post-medieval seals.
  - Latin continued to be used for seal legends until the 20th century, and Greek is also found on 17th-20th century seals.
- d) Text only is found on some seals, just as some seals only have a *motif*.
  - Apart from on the back of a papal *bull*, having words only was extremely rare in Britain in the medieval period, but became increasingly common in the 19th and 20th centuries; most company seal *matrices* made after c.1900 have only text, for example.
  - Far more common, and potentially crossing the boundary between *motif* and text, are seals with a monogram or two or three letters, most often relating to the owner of the *matrix*. In the medieval period, the Sacred Monogram ("IHS", from the Greek form of the name Jesus) was popular in the later 13th to 15th centuries (see examples in Appendix One at p.38 below). Single letters surmounted by a crown or accompanied by foliage became common in the 15th century.
  - In the post medieval period, the initials of the owner, often elaborately entwined, were also popular.

# Appendix 1.

## Examples of motif keywords and images

(NB This list is indicative, and not exhaustive or proscriptive)

Motif keyword / phrase	Examples		
Animal			
Bird			
Bird hunting			
Bird on hand			

Motif keyword / phrase	Examples		
Boar's head			
Building			
Christogram			
Clasped hands			
Crescent			

Motif keyword / phrase	Examples		
Figure on horse			
Fish			
Grotesque hybrid			
Hand and item			
Hare on hound			

Motif keyword / phrase	Examples		
Head			
Head on dish			
Lamb and staff			
Letter			
Lion			



Motif keyword / phrase	Examples		
Lion sleeping			
Merchant mark			
Pelican feeding			
Radial			
Shield			

Motif keyword / phrase	Examples		
Ship			
Squirrel			
Stag head			
Standing figure			
Stylized lily			

<b>Motif keyword / phrase</b>	<b>Examples</b>		
Tool weapon			
Two heads			
Woman and child			

# Appendix 2.

## Seals and sealing practices in Britain

NB Unless a specific date is provided, all dating is approximate.

### Sealing Practice

### Physical Aspects of Sealing

<p><b>1000</b></p> <p>Edward the Confessor (1042-66), king of the English, uses a double-sided seal for documentary authentication</p>	<p>Wax attached by tongues for almost all documents regardless of size or type of seal / <i>sigillant</i></p>
<p><b>1050</b></p> <p>William the Conqueror (1066-86) introduces the standard majesty and equestrian images for the Great Seal</p> <p>Duncan II (1093-4), first king of Scots known to use a Great Seal for authentication</p> <p>Monastic houses in Britain start to use <i>seals of validation and authentication</i></p> <p>Earliest known clergy seals in Britain</p>	
<p><b>1100</b></p> <p>Secular nobles start to use seals for authentication</p>	<p>Episcopal seals start to be of pointed oval shape as standard</p>
<p>Earliest evidence of the use of seals for authentication in Wales</p>	<p>Flat (<i>flat-stamp</i>) matrices become prevalent Earliest known use of pigment to colour <i>sealing wax</i></p>
<p>Non-noble <i>sigillants</i> appear</p>	<p><i>Tags</i> and <i>cords</i> start to be used more frequently</p>
<p><b>1150</b></p> <p>Heraldic devices appearing on some noble seals</p>	
<p>Earliest known town seals in England</p>	<p>Increasing use of turn-ups for <i>tags</i> and <i>cords</i></p> <p>Green becomes increasingly common colour for <i>sealing wax</i></p>

Sealing Practice	Physical Aspects of Sealing
<p>Cistercian General Chapter requires each house to have an abbatical seal with the image of an abbot or a hand holding a staff</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1200</b></p>	
<p>Rapid increase in town seals / seals for urban governance</p>	
<p>Dramatic increase in sealing / seal ownership across society</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1250</b></p>	
<p>Privy seal introduced to English &amp; Scottish royal governance</p>	
<p>Heraldic devices rapidly replacing equestrian image on seals of secular noblemen</p>	
<p>Fashion for wealthier monastic houses to create elaborate new seal <i>matrices</i></p>	<p><i>Tongues</i> generally restricted to less important / more ephemeral documents</p>
<p>Increasing use of 'anonymous' (non-name) legends on personal seals</p>	<p><i>Pedestal matrices</i> start to become more common</p>
<p>Statute of Gloucester: all claims to free land in England had to be supported by a <i>sealed instrument</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1278</b></p>	<p>Noticeable decrease in size for most personal seals</p>
<p>Statute of Acton Burnell introduces Statute Merchant seals for the recognizance of debt in England</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1283</b></p>	
<p>Statute of Merchants introduces a second, smaller, <i>matrix</i> for the recognizance of debt</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1285</b></p>	
<p>Statute of Exeter allows unfree men to sit on juries if they possess a seal</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1285</b></p>	
<p>Expulsion of Jews from England. All documents validated by the seals of Jews become null and void</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>1290</b></p>	

**Sealing Practice**

**Physical Aspects of Sealing**

Cocket (custom house) seal in use in Scotland

1300

Statute of Carlisle. All religious houses in England and Wales required to have a common seal

1307

Increasing use of red pigment and uncoloured wax, especially for personal seal impressions

Deliberate imprint of knuckle(?) -prints on the back of wax increase in frequency

Use of *rush guards* for wax impressions begins

1350

Increasing numbers of personal seals with one or more letters as the '*motif*', increasing use of merchant mark *motifs* on seals. Gradual decrease in number of seals with a legend

*Skippets* start to appear

1400

1450

Increasing use of signatures alongside seals

Red-brown colour wax of inferior quality becomes increasingly common

1500

Seals for the Courts of Great Session (Wales) introduced

Increasing use of *applied seals* (usually on paper)

1542

1550

Noticeable decline in personal seal usage

1600

**Sealing Practice**

**Physical Aspects of Sealing**

Great Seal for the Commonwealth replaces traditional imagery with a map of Britain and depiction of the Commons in session

1649

*Shellac* starts to be used for *applied seals*

1650

Fashion for 4-faced *matrices* emerges

Majesty / equestrian imagery reintroduced for Great Seal of Charles II

1660

1700

Act of Union: Separate Great Seals for the English and Scottish crowns abolished, replaced with one for the British crown  
Image of Britannia replaces equestrian *motif* on reverse of Anne's second Great Seal (equestrian *motif* reintroduced by George I)

1707

Increased wearing of *fob seal matrices* as a form of adornment

1750

Introduction of seal presses to create raised-stamp impressions

Mass-produced *matrices* advertised in catalogues

Start of fashion for images of popular heroes on personal seals

1800

Increased use of wafer seals

Municipal Corporations Act increases number of and regulations about local authority seals

1835

Taking casts from *seal impressions* becomes increasingly common

Signet Office abolished

1851

Introduction of artificial materials for impressions

Increasing regulation and codification of the use of corporate seals (e.g. in 1867 Railways Act)



**Sealing Practice****Physical Aspects of Sealing**

Sealing Practice	Physical Aspects of Sealing
	Mass-produced <i>matrices</i> available in stationers' shops
	Artificial versions of <i>shellac</i> introduced
Forgery Act reduces the punishment for forging the Great Seal from death to life imprisonment	
Great Seal of the Irish Free State (Séala Mór do Shaorstát Éireann) and the Great Seal of Northern Ireland replace the Great Seal for Ireland	
Scottish Parliament uses its own Great Seal of Scotland	
Second Great Seal for Queen Elizabeth II replaces the equestrian image on the reverse with the royal arms	
Sêl Gymreig / Welsh seal introduced for government in Wales	
Companies Act removes the requirement for all registered companies in England and Wales to have a corporate seal	
Privy Council approve continued use of the royal and governmental seals of Queen Elizabeth II until new ones are made for King Charles III	



# Appendix 3.

## Glossary of terminology relating to seals and sealing

- **Applied seal**  
Seal impression made directly into wax / shellac applied to the face of a document
- **Bezel**  
Area of a ring larger than the rest of the loop which carries a design; in seal rings, this is the area engraved as the matrix
- **Bulla Seal**  
Impression made in metal, usually lead
- **Cast Replica**  
Cast from an original impression (modern impressions from historic matrices are also often called 'casts')
- **Cords**  
Generic term for fabric cords or laces used to attach a wax seal to a document
- **Flat (flat-stamp)**  
Matrix Disc of metal (of any shape) engraved as a seal on one or both sides with a small tab or suspension loop on the back or emerging from the top
- **Fob seal**  
A small post-medieval matrix attached to a chain or ribbon and worn on the person
- **Gem / ancient gem**  
Term generally used for a stone engraved as a seal matrix in the ancient world and re-set in a medieval / post-medieval matrix.
- **Intaglio**  
Engraved into the surface
- **Legend**  
Text on a seal, usually written around the outside of the motif
- **Matrix / die**  
Object made from a hard material into which a motif and/or words has been engraved and / or cast
- **Motif**  
Image(s) on a seal
- **Pendent seal**  
Impression of a matrix in wax, metal, or other support which is attached to a document by cords or a tag or tongue
- **Pedestal seal matrix**  
Matrix with a tall handle, the engraved face forming the base when placed on a flat surface. Also called 'tall handle' or 'chess-piece'
- **Seal impression**  
Impression made by a matrix into soft material

- **Seal of closure**  
A seal used as a means of securing or keeping something closed
- **Seal of validation and authentication**  
A seal impression used to authenticate a document
- **Sealed instrument**  
A document with a wax / lead disc bearing the impression of a matrix (this term is used even if the impression or its support has been lost)
- **Sealing**
  - i) Technical term for a seal impression
  - ii) Act of impressing a matrix to form an impression
- **Sealing clause**  
Section of a document which states the sigillant(s) who are appending the seals
- **Sealing wax**  
Beeswax, often with pigment and / or resin added
- **Shellac**  
Resinous excretion of the lac bug, *Tachardia lacca* / *Kerria lacca*. In the context of seals and sealing, this is the hard shiny material (often dyed red and usually formed into sticks or pellets) which is usually, if incorrectly, referred to as 'sealing wax'
- **Skippet**  
Container (usually of metal) which encloses a pendent seal
- **Sigillant**  
The legal 'person' who is sealing. This can be an individual, either in a private or official capacity, or an institution, corporate body or group
- **Sigillography, sphragistics**  
The study of seals and sealing practices
- **Signet**  
Technically, a small seal, although often used to refer to a matrix in the form of a finger ('signet') ring
- **Tag**  
Strip of parchment threaded through the foot of a document to provide support for pendent seals
- **Tongue**  
Part of the foot of a document cut to form a strip for attaching wax discs for sealing
- **Varnish**  
In the context of medieval sealing, the term used for the substance which has been applied to the surface of sealing wax after a matrix has been impressed
- **Written instrument**  
A legal or official document

# Suggested further reading

## General

Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, 'Seals' in Szarmach, P. E., Tavormina, M. T. and Rosenthal, J. T. (eds.), *Medieval England: An Encyclopaedia* (New York and London, 1998), pp. 691-2.

P.D.A. Harvey and A. McGuinness, *A Guide to British Medieval Seals* (London, 1996)

Elizabeth A. New, *Seals and Sealing Practices* British Records Association *Archives & the User* 11 (London, 2010)

## Conservation

4th International Archives Round Table of Seal Conservators report (the English version follows the French one) [https://usercontent.one/wp/www.sigillvm.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/abstract-\\_ensemble-1.pdf](https://usercontent.one/wp/www.sigillvm.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/abstract-_ensemble-1.pdf)

Elke Cwiertnia, Adrian Ailes, Paul Dryburgh, 'The National Archives' Wax Seals Project: Material and Context Project, 2014-2015', in *Materiality Matters: New Approaches to medieval Sealing Culture*, Markus Späth and Joachim Kemper, eds (Brussels, 2020), pp. 13-26.

Hilary Jenkinson, *Guide to Seals in Public Record Office* (London, 1954)

John A. McEwan, 'Reflectance transformation imaging and the future of medieval sigillography', *History Compass*, iss. e12477 (2018)

John A. McEwan, 'The past, present and future of sigillography: towards a new structural standard for seal catalogues', *Archives and Records*, vol. 41 (2017), pp.1-20

C. Woods, 'The Nature and Treatment of Wax and Shellac Seals', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 15 (1994), pp. 203-14

## Collections and more focused topics

*7000 Years of Seals*, ed. D. Collon (London, 1997). Resulting from a British Museum exhibition and conference, this volume's focus is on matrices but geographically and temporally wide-ranging.

*A Companion to Seals in the Middle Ages*, ed. L. Whatley (Leiden, 2019). A recent collection of essays, including ones about the composition of sealing wax in the royal chancery and the importance of looking at non-heraldic personal seals.

Pierre Chaplais, *English Royal Documents: King John-Henry VI, 1199-1461* (Oxford, 1971). This important work includes a good survey of sealing practices in medieval English royal government.

*Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals*, ed. N. Adams, J. Cherry, and Robinson (London, 2008). A wide-ranging collection of focused studies.

Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307*. 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1992). Not specifically about seals but this standard and long-standing work contains a lot of useful and thought-provoking comments on seals and sealing practices.

Paul Dryburgh. Royal Seals. *The National Archives. Images of Power and Majesty*. (Barnsley, 2020). Lavishly illustrated volume showcasing royal, personal and ecclesiastical seals held at The National Archives (Kew, London)

*Seals and their Context in the Middle Ages* ed. P.R. Schofield (Oxford, 2015). A collection of essays focusing on medieval Britain.

*Seals and Society. Medieval Wales, the Welsh Marches and their English border counties* ed. P.R. Schofield and E.A. New (Cardiff, 2016). Volume resulting from the AHRC Seals in Medieval Wales project. Very useful Appendix of seals recorded in medieval Wales.

## Useful websites

[www.sigillvm.net](http://www.sigillvm.net) Website for Sigillvm, the international network for research into the history, art, preservation and use of seals.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/seals/> The National Archives (UK)'s guide to seals and sealed documents.

[www.imprintseals.org](http://www.imprintseals.org) Site of the AHRC project Imprint. *A forensic and historical investigation of fingerprints on medieval seals.*

[www.digisig.org](http://www.digisig.org) Valuable website that draws together seal data from a range of catalogues, but still under construction.

[www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk) The Portable Antiquities Scheme website for England and Wales, recording archaeological objects found by members of the public – you can search the online database for seal matrices by date, location, material etc. N.B. No equivalent to PAS in Northern Ireland. Treasure Trove legislation is used in Scotland.

<https://www.icon.org.uk/resources/caring-for-your-collection.html>. ICON, the UK's Institute of Conservation.

<https://www.ica.org/en/isadg-general-international-standard-archival-description-second-edition> General International Standard Archival Description (2nd edition), the principal cataloguing standard for UK archives.

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/mapping-of-isadg-to-spectrum-5-0/> Helpful advice for mapping between the fields used for UK archive cataloguing (ISAD(G)) and museum cataloguing (Spectrum).

[www.lewis.dur.ac.uk/seals/](http://www.lewis.dur.ac.uk/seals/) Durham University's useful introduction to medieval seals.

[www.medieval.library.nd.edu/seals/index.shtml](http://www.medieval.library.nd.edu/seals/index.shtml) University of Notre Dame introduction to seals (mainly focusing on European examples).

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Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Bedfordshire Record Office  
Berkshire Record Office  
Bishops Conference of Scotland  
British Museum  
Canterbury Cathedral  
Chatsworth House  
Cheshire Archives and Local Studies  
Christ Church College Oxford  
Complutense University of Madrid, Spain  
Corpus Christi College Cambridge  
Culture Perth and Kinross  
Derbyshire Record Office  
Dundee Cultural Services  
Episcopal Diocesan Archive, Aachen  
Eton College  
Europeana Pro  
Exeter Cathedral  
Exeter College Oxford  
Faraday Institute Cambridge  
Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge  
Flintshire Archives  
Folger Shakespeare Library  
Gladstone Library  
Glasgow Life  
Herbert Art Gallery and Museum  
Hereford Cathedral  
Herefordshire Archives  
Kent Archives  
King's College Cambridge  
Kings College London  
Lambeth Palace Library  
Leeds University  
Library of Birmingham  
Lincoln Cathedral  
Lincoln College Oxford  
Marsh's Library, Dublin  
Mercers' Company London  
Misericordia Barcelos, Portugal

Museum of London  
National Archives of Singapore  
National Library of Scotland  
National Library of Wales  
National Museum of Wales  
National Museums Scotland  
National Records of Scotland  
New College Oxford  
Norfolk Record Office  
North Yorkshire Record Office  
Norwich Castle Museum  
Orkney Library and Archive  
Oxford Conservation Consortium  
Oxfordshire Museums  
Pembroke College Cambridge  
Perth Archives and Local Studies  
Qatar National Library  
Royal Collection Trust  
Royal College of Physicians  
Royal Irish Academy  
St George's Chapel, Windsor  
St John's College Cambridge  
St Louis University, USA  
Salisbury Cathedral  
Salisbury Museum  
Senate House Library (University of London)  
Society of Antiquaries of London  
Surrey History Centre  
Tamworth Castle  
The National Archives (UK)  
Trinity College Cambridge  
University of Cambridge Library  
University of East Anglia  
University of Maryland, USA  
University of St Andrews  
University of the Arts  
University of Warwick  
Walsall Council Archives  
Warwickshire Record Office  
Wells Cathedral/Wells City Archive  
Winchester College  
Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service  
Yale University, USA

**We extend our apologies for any institutions which we have accidentally omitted here. We are happy to correct this error in future editions.**



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