

BRUCE C. WILLSIE, Class of 1986

Collection of British Sigillography (C0953)

After the Roman conquest of Britain in the first century A.D., seals began to be used to authenticate documents in England. Under King Edward the Confessor (r. 1042-1066), royal documents came to have two-sided pendant seals, generally attached to the document by means of a parchment tag and later braided cords. Most common in England were "equestrian seals," portraying the king enthroned on the front, surrounded by the symbols of royal authority, and depicting him as a mounted knight on the back. This is an open collection comprised of five series. All but one item (as indicated) are the gift of Bruce C. Willsie, Class of 1986.

SERIES:

1. Seal matrices

Seal matrices in bronze, latten, lead, and copper alloys, arranged in five sub-series: *The following links access snapshot views of the seals (and their descriptions). Internet Explorer must be used. Please be patient while they load.*

- (1) [Romano-British Seals](#)
- (2) [Royal, Court, and Noble Seals](#)
- (3) [13th-century Seals](#)
- (4) [14th-century seals](#)
- (5) [15th-century seals.](#)

Matrices can be round, lozenge-shaped, or armorial, usually with raised handles ending in a suspension loop, into which one would have laced a linen cord, leather thong, or metal chain in order to carry the matrix. Imagery varies widely among personal seals, from religious motifs to flowers, animals, and brief mottos, such as a fourteenth-century merchant's bronze seal matrix, depicting a squirrel with a Middle English motto that reads "I crake notis" (that is, "I crack nuts").

2. Royal charters with Great Seal and other documents

3. Wax seals without documents

4. Seal impressions

5. Styluses for wax writing tablets

1. Royal charters with Great Seal and other documents

John (r. 1199-1216), Charter granting one carucate of land in Peneberi, to Elias, son of Robert, of the Pendlebury family. The land is now in Pendlebury, within the city of Salford, Greater Manchester, formerly Lancashire. Witnesses include Archbishop Geoffrey of York, the bishops of Salisbury and St. Andrews, Earl Robert of Leicester, and others. Confirms the grant made by John as the earl of Mortain. Given under the hands of Archdeacon Simon of Wells and John de Gray at Le Mans, 9 October 1199. Parchment, 12 x 18 cm. Great seal of the realm (pendant, on cord), with losses. The charter was formerly the property of Mrs. P. Kirwan. Mounted.

Henry III (r. 1216-72), Charter granting a market to Prior Heny and the canons of the Augustinian Priory (formerly abbey) of St. Mary Magdalen, Cumbwell (or Combwell), County of Kent. Given at Westminster, in 17 Henry III, 27 February 1233. Parchment, 19 x 19 cm. Great seal of the realm (pendant, on cord), with losses. Mounted.

Edward I (r. 1272-1307), Charter granting permission to Joanna de Buttecourt to alienate the manor of Werveleye, County of Worcester, to the Praemonstratensian Abbey of Halesowen, 2 May 1283. The abbey was located in Halesowen, West Midlands, southwest of the city of Birmingham. Parchment, 20.5 x 29.0 cm. Great seal of the realm (pendant, on cord). Mounted.

Richard le Archer, Grant of pasture land to his son in Hokelowe (now Hockley, a village between Chelmsford and Southend-on-Sea), County of Essex. Given after the Feast of St. Gregory (12 March), 1303. Parchment, 11 x 18 cm. Personal seal in green wax (pendant, on parchment tag). A bit of vine is wrapped around the seal tag, perhaps attached for symbolic purposes to represent the pasture land. Mounted.

Edward III (r. 1327-77), Letter Patent, 1337. Missing.

Henry VI (r. 1422-61, 1470-71), Charter confirming a grant of lands to William, the son of William de Bekeswell, 26 June 1426. The lands are in Bekeswell, Crumpleham, Fincham, Fordham, and other places in the County of Norfolk. Parchment, 32 x 39 cm. Great seal of the realm (pendant, on cord). Mounted.

[Henry VI (r. 1422-61, 1470-71)], An agreement in Middle English between Thomas Fuliambe (“the olde squyere of the Shyre of Derby”) and twelve other people pertaining to the boundaries of Hasslop Lordship, County of Derby, 6 August 1431. Parchment, 17.0 x 29.7 cm. Twelve private seals (pendant, on parchment tags). Mounted.

Edward IV (r. 1461-1470, 1471-1483), Letter patent in the name of Edward IV, confirming the decision of the Warwick Assizes of 20 March 1446, with the Seal of the Court of Common Pleas, 9 November 1465. Great Seal of Edward IV (pendant seal, on cord), the fourth seal, used 1471-1480. Mounted.

Henry VIII (r. 1509-1547). Letters patent attesting to a crown grant of properties to Sir

Thomas Paston, with Great Seal (pendant seal, on cord, reattached), 3 January 1545.
Mounted.

Mary I (r. 1553-1558) and King Philip II of Spain, consort (r. 1554-1558), Charter, 1558/9.
Mounted.

Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603), Charter for Spalding and Pinchbeck (seal missing), 20 October 1559. Mounted.

Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603), Charter for Penelope Hanham (d. 1621/22), wife of Thomas Hanham (1576-1652), Member of Parliament for Minehead; and daughter of Sir John Popham (1531-1607), Lord Chief Justice and Speaker of the House of Commons, who funded the Popham Colony, in what is now Phillipsburg, Maine, 1607-08. Parchment, 35 x 58 cm. Seal (pendant, on parchment tag). Gift of Moses Taylor Pyne, Class of 1877.
Mounted.

Elizabeth I, Close letter, 1582. Mounted.

Nicholas Bacon (1510-79), Signed document, 1561. Acquired with 15 Elizabethan indentures and other documents, various dates.

James I (r. 1603-25), License of alienation from John Estose to Thomas Anderson, with Great Seal, 20 October 1622.

Charles I (r. 1625-49), Letters patent making a grant upon the Mountford Estate, with Great Seal, 6 June 1630.

Charles I (r. 1625-49), Multi-part deed for land in Hepworth, Suffolk, 30 May 1632. Thirteen small wax seals (all but three being complete) on parchment tags.

Cromwellian Recovery, May 1652. Decorated with pieces of parchment with hand-colored Commonwealth arms (Cross of St. George and an Irish harp, as well as an English rose and a Scottish thistle). Parchment tag without seal. Mounted.

Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector (r. 1653-58), Exemplification of Recovery, 20 July 1654.
Mounted.

Richard Cromwell, Lord Protector (r. 1658-59), Exemplification of Recovery, 1658.
Mounted.

Charles II (r. 1660-85), Exemplification of recovery pertaining to the petitions of Isaac Hart against Henry Lewen for property in Holmehurst and Christchurch, Twyneham, Southampton, 20 May 1667.

Charles II (r. 1660-85), Letter patents to all the Officers of the Law, relating to the custodianship by the Chancellor of the Great Seal, February 1676.

William III and Mary II (r. 1689-1702), Fine, 1694. Seal missing.

Anne (r. 1702-14), Charter, 1704.

George II (r. 1727-60), Letters patent commissioning George Purviss as comptroller of the Navy, with Great Seal, 27 February 1735.

[George III] Burgess letter from the Borough of King's Lynn to James Fysh, with the seal of King's Lynn, Norfolk, 6 July 1778.

George III (r. 1760-1820), Exemplification of recovery for lands in Wiltshire, with Great Seal and skippet, 12 February 1788.

George III (r. 1760-1820), Pardon, 1779.

George IV (r. 1820-30), Recovery of lands in Kent, 1821.

William IV (r. 1830-37), Grant to William Cockayne of rents at Shalton, County of Derby, 23 September 1830. Great seal on a parchment tag, with a separate skippet.

Victoria (r. 1837-1901), Great Seal with skippet (unattached), n.d. The seal is of the design used before 1898.

Victoria (r. 1837-1901), Letter patents issued on 7 January 1873 to John Argall, a mining engineer in Adderbury, County of Oxford, for improvements in manufacturing oil paints, with Great Seal and skippet.

2. Wax seals without documents (3 boxes)

Richard II, Great Seal

Henry VI (r. 1422-61, 1470-71), 1st Great Seal

Edward IV, 4th Great Seal

Edward VI, Seal of the Court of Augmentation

Henry VIII, 3rd Great Seal

Elizabeth I, Great Seal (2)

Charles II, Seal of the Court of Augmentation

Catherine, consort of Charles II, 2nd Great Seal

William and Mary, Great Seal

James I, Great Seal

Victoria, Great Seal with skippet

Stewart, James Francis Edward (1688-1766), known as "The Old Pretender" and father of Bonnie Prince Charlie, "The Young Pretender," Seal

Duke of Kent(?), Seal.