SEAL MATRIX

Unique ID: IHS-6720D3

Object type certainty: Certain Workflow status: Published

A copper alloy vesica-shaped (pointed oval) seal matrix, plain back other than suspension loop on short raised ridge intact at top. Device of "A pelican in her piety", i.e., a female pelican, here perching on the edge of her nest, pecking at her breast in order to draw the blood with which she feeds her three chicks, beaks agape, in the nest below. The nest rests at the top of a tree, which is indicated by its trunk and five slender branches. The two outer branches end in globular clumps of leaves, the other three support the nest, which is covered in clover-like leaves. The tree and nest occupies half of the available area, the pelican's body occupying the remainder. The bird's wing runs up the right-hand side, with the bend in her neck occurring at the apex of the available space. Device is separated from the legend by a neat line; a similar line deliniates the outer edge of the face. Piece in generally very nice condition.

Measurements: 25 mm x 50 mm; 3 mm thick (maximum dimensions).

A particularly nice example of the type. Worthy of note is the fact the lettering is clean and even, whilst the central design has been executed with an eye for detail, noticeable at such points as the bird's plumage and the ornate nest. A wide range of people used the pelican on their matrices; e.g., see IHS-671517 (ferryman?) and here a clerk.

The image known as "the pelican in her piety" has its roots in the Bible (Psalms, 102:6). The import of this bird, thought to be a creature of solitary habits dwelling in Egypt, was developed by Christian commentators. Essentially, the pelican chicks were held to attack their parents as they grew older; the parents, in response, struck back and killed the chicks. However, on the third day the mother pelican drew her own blood which, pouring over the dead chicks, brought them back to life. The pelican was interpreted as Christ, Egypt the world; the bird's solitary nature as emblematic of Jesus' unique birth from a virgin. The death meted out to the chicks was the death meted out to pagan beliefs by Christ's words, and their three days' death was terminated by the shedding of blood, which was Christ's blood shed to save mankind.

Such a matrix was thus eminently suitable for a learned man, which the owner of this matrix, Adam of Scarborough, was. He was not a cleric in the modern sense, but a clerk, an educated individual who will have made his living from his literacy. See also IHS-65B358 and IHS-671517

Inscription: +S'ADE DE SCARDEBVRGH CLERICI (Latin: The seal of Ade (Adam) of Scarborough, Clerk).

Subsequent actions

Current location of find: Returned to finder

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: MEDIEVAL

Subperiod from: Late Period from: MEDIEVAL Date from: AD 1200

Date to: AD 1350

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1 Length: 50 mm Width: 25 mm Thickness: 3 mm

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Friday 1st February 2002

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Other reference numbers

Other reference: Originally York Sealmat 147b

Materials and construction

Primary material: Copper alloy Manufacture method: Cast

Spatial metadata

Region: East Midlands (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: Lincolnshire (County)

District: **East Lindsey** (District)

Parish or ward: Ludford (Civil Parish)

Spatial coordinates

4 Figure: TF1989

Four figure Latitude: 53.384448 Four figure longitude: -0.212303

1:25K map: TF1989 1:10K map: TF18NE

Grid reference source: From a paper map

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 1000 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector Current location: Returned to finder General landuse: Cultivated land Specific landuse: Character undetermined

Harvey, P.D.A. and McGuinness, A., 1996 $\underline{\textit{A Guide to British Medieval Seals}}$ London: British Library and Public Record Office,