

NOTES

TWO THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SEALS



Fig. 1. Left: Seal from High Wycombe. Right: Seal from Upton. Both $\times 1.5$. The drawings show the impression, not the matrix.

Among the recent finds donated to the Buckinghamshire County Museum are two leaden seal-matrices. One of them, found at Upton, some three and a half miles west of Aylesbury, is of pointed oval shape (35 \times 22mm) and has a fleur-de-lis as its central device. The legend, set in a plain border, is in clumsy Lombardic lettering: +S' SAVRICI FIL' RIC'. (Sigillum Savrici filii Ricardi; the seal of Savary, son of Richard). Savary (alternatively spelt Savery, Savory, Savoury, Severy) was a name in vogue during the second half of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century.¹ The forms of some of the letters in the inscription appear to belong to the second quarter of the thirteenth century.² The back of this matrix has a slight midrib, from the top of which, by way of a handle, an unperforated lug projects at right angles.

The other matrix, found at High Wycombe, about half a mile from the town centre, is circular (diam. 28mm) and unusually thin (1.5mm) and on the back has traces of a slender tab, which would have served as a handle. Its

central motif is an eight-pointed star. The legend, within a plain border, is in uneven Lombardic lettering of a style consistent with a late twelfth or early thirteenth-century date *S'[G]WLEDVSE. FIL. IEVAP (=Sigillum Gwledvse filie Ievap; the seal of Gwladus ferch (daughter of) Ievaf or Ievan). The first name is plainly a version of the Welsh name Gwladus (Gladusa); the second is not so clear, because it would fit either of the male names Ievan or Ievaf, both of which occur fairly frequently in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In Bartrum's Welsh genealogies for the period 1215-1350 are recorded three women called Gwladus ferch Ievan.³

These seals are characteristic of the most ordinary kind of non-heraldic seal-die in use during the first half of the thirteenth century. They are of lead, which by the end of the century had fallen out of favour with seal-holders. They exemplify the two basic seal-shapes, pointed oval and circular, and they employ the two commonest motifs, the fleur-de-lis and star. Almost all of the fifty seal-

impressions appended to an agreement (preserved in Public Records Office) by the men of Frieston and Butterwick, Lincs, between 1217 and 1232 take one or other of these two forms.⁴ Both of the Buckinghamshire finds belong to a period when it had come to be generally accepted that seals were essential for making documents legally valid.

The Welshwoman's seal is likely to have travelled with its owner far from its place of origin and to have been accidentally lost at High Wycombe. The importance given both to the safekeeping and to the use of personal seal-dies at this period is illustrated by an entry in the day books of the medieval municipality of London, in which were recorded the most varied matters of concern to the community. In 1301 it was noted that on 24 April 'public cry was made that Richer de Refham, taverner, had lost his seal with the impression of a cask thereon, and his name written around it, and that the said Richer would no longer be bound by the seal aforesaid'.⁵

Records of such oral disclaimers are, however, rare. At the same time surprisingly large numbers of thirteenth and fourteenth-century seal-matrices have been, and continue to be, recovered as chance finds from the soil. It is therefore tempting to conclude that few people, especially those at the lower end of the seal-using classes did, in fact, show much concern over the loss of their seals. It is, however, likely that most of the matrices unearthed today found their way into the ground as a result of being not so much lost as deliberately disposed of, after their owners had died or had decided to have a seal-matrix made in line with the latest fashion. Sometimes the discarded seals were defaced before being thrown away.

The museum is grateful to Mrs Susan Spinks of Upton and Mrs Audrey Parry Jones of High Wycombe for their generosity in donating these interesting relics of medieval life.

B. Spencer
The Museum of London

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2. H. S. Kingsford, 'The epigraphy of medieval English seals', *Archaeologia* 79 (1929) 149-74.
3. I am much indebted to Dr David Crouch for this information.
4. Sir Hilary Jenkinson, *Guide to seals in the Public Record Office* (London, 1954) pl. II.
5. R. R. Sharpe (ed.), *Calendar of Letter-Book C 1291-1309* (London, 1901) 91.

THE GEOLOGY OF WOAD FARM GRAVEL PIT NEWPORT PAGNELL, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

During the summer of 1988 Blisworth Clay and Upper Cornbrash limestones (Middle Jurassic) were excavated from beneath a cover of Quaternary terrace deposits and alluvium at Woad Farm Gravel Pit (SP881 443).

Blisworth Clay

The oldest rocks encountered belong to the Blisworth Clay, which is of (*aspidoides* up to *discus* Zone, Bathonian, Middle Jurassic, see Torrens 1980). The Blisworth Clay varies in thickness from about 4 to 5.9m in the Milton Keynes area (Horton *et al.* 1974. No more than

a metre of these sediments were exposed in drainage channels near the main working face; however they were well displayed *ex situ* on adjacent spoil tips. They are dominated here by turquoise, purple, blue and grey mudstones, sometimes shaley. Fossils do not occur throughout; however certain hard grey shaley clays were full of the oyster *Praexogyra hebridica*. These are occasionally encrusted by serpulid worm tubes and sometimes bear thin borings, which may be attributable to sponges. The trace fossil *Gnathichnus* occurs on some oysters, and represents the grazing traces of regular echi-

noids. *Placunopsis* sp. cf. *P. Socialis* (a small bivalve) is also abundant in this clay. Pale grey-green clays yielded a reptilian bone fragment, in association with nodules of white to pale green hard splintery porcellaneous limestone. These bear thin calcite-lined cracks and thin sinuous cavernous structures (less than 3mm wide), sometimes filled with a mixture of calcite and carbonaceous debris. These are interpreted here as rootlet structures. The nodules bear a strong resemblance to calccrete nodules, which form subaerially, in soil profiles. For details of Blisworth Clay environments and palaeoecology see Horton *et al.* (1974) and Hudson and Palmer (1976).

Upper Cornbrash

The Lower Cornbrash (*discus* Zone, Bathonian, Middle Jurassic, see Torrens 1980) is partly or wholly absent in the Newport Pagnell area (Horton *et al.* 1974) and strata of Upper Cornbrash age (*macrocephalus* Zone, Callovian, Middle Jurassic, see Duff 1980) rest on a surface of Blisworth Clay. Limestones of the Upper Cornbrash had been excavated from beneath terrace deposits at the southern end of the exposure, but were not seen *in situ*. They comprise hard partly crystalline shelly limestone weathering yellow, but dark grey to black when fresh. Fossils include rhynchonellid brachiopods (cf. *Rhynchonelloidella* sp.) and bivalves (*Entolium* sp.). Two large ammonites (*Macrocephalites* sp.) were donated by workmen; the better preserved of these is weathered but unabraded and undoubtedly came from *in situ* limestone. The other is somewhat abraded and rolled and was probably dug as a derived fossil from the base of overlying terrace gravels. Horton *et al.* (1974) have previously recorded Cornbrash limestone from adjacent gravel pits.

Terrace Deposits

Sands and gravels at this locality have been placed in the local First Terrace succession by Horton *et al.* (1974).

They comprise up to 3m of coarse sandy gravel with lenses of cross-laminated pebbly sands. Iron staining locally occurs. In the domi-

nant coarser layers the clasts are often up to 60mm in diameter and rounded to angular in shape. Chalk flints comprise about 60% of the clasts; other conspicuous constituents include sandy ironstone from the Lower Cretaceous Woburn Sands, shelly Middle Jurassic limestones, *Gryphaea* and belemnites from the Oxford Clay (Middle to Upper Jurassic), and worn phosphatized fragments of Kimmeridgian (Upper Jurassic) ammonites, also probably derived from the Woburn Sands. Rare clasts of weathered igneous lithologies suggest that at least some debris has been reworked from glacial boulder clay.

Throughout most of the exposure the sands and gravels appear to rest directly on a relatively planar surface of Blisworth Clay. At the southern end of the pit however, near where the Upper Cornbrash forms the sub-terrace floor, a previously unrecorded lenticular organic horizon occurs between blue Blisworth Clay and overlying sands and gravels. It comprises a dark sand, up to 15cm thick, with black humic laminae, full of twig fragments and locally rich in fragile shells of freshwater gastropods and bivalves. In addition Dr Eric Robinson of University College, London has extracted a rich ostracod microfauna, the composition of which indicates a temperate phase of an interglacial deposit, perhaps of Hoxnian or Ipswichian age. The micro/macrofauna/flora will hopefully form the basis of a more detailed study.

Alluvium

In the southern exposures an ironstained upper surface of the terrace deposits is overlain by alluvium, comprising 1.5m of poorly stratified blue to orange clay, with local traces of vertical to sub-vertical rootlets.

Acknowledgments

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J.D. Radley

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A WINDMILL MOUND AT PENN BOTTOM

The existence of a mound in the grounds of Penn House was brought to the attention of Miles Green by Dr Robin Horn, while the former was researching the history of Penn parish. It was variously described by locals who knew of its existence as a 'motte' (of a motte and bailey castle) or a 'treasure mound', and the surrounding hillside is known to local shooting parties as 'Millbank'. To establish the nature of the mound a ground survey was undertaken.

The mound (SU 92429443) stands in the private grounds of Penn House about 145m above sea-level and overlooking the dry valley that runs south-eastwards through Penn Bottom to Beaconsfield. Mature trees and shrubs cover the mound which now forms part of a thin strip of woodland which was formerly a drive from Penn Bottom to Penn House. The fields adjacent to the mound and on either side of the old drive are now cultivated.

A roughly circular, shallow ditch surrounds the mound (Fig. 1) and the whole monument is about 30m in diameter; at its highest point it stands about 2.4m above the present bottom of the ditch. There is a trace of an external ditch in the south-west quadrant only. The top of the mound is about 10m in diameter with a depression in the centre which almost gives the impression of its being a 'ring-work'. The top is approached by two ramps, the eastern one 2.5m wide and the western 1.5m wide. The ramps are slightly 'offset' from one another when they reach the top of the mound. The ring on the top of the mound is virtually non-existent at the point where the eastern ramp joins it.

About 3m to the north of the edge of the ditch is the bank and ditch of a field boundary which becomes very indistinct to the north-west, but probably turns to run southwards (not shown in Fig. 1). The eastern ramp, part of the mound itself and the field boundary ditch, are all crossed by the line of the old drive, which runs roughly south to north towards Penn House. Beyond the old drive to the east (not shown on Fig. 1) there is a large, shallow, and overgrown pit.

The size of the mound and the distinctive ramps are consistent with its use as the base for a windmill. There are local field names, such as 'pale mill field' and 'great mill field', which agree with this interpretation. The mound is too small for a 'motte' despite the ring-like appearance of the top of the mound, and there is no sign of a bailey.

It is possible that the depression on top is the result of some earlier digging and may explain the local use of the term 'treasure mound'. It is not unknown for windmills to be set on top of barrows.

Material for the mound probably came from the ditch. The adjacent shallow pit could also have provided material or it may have been dug to provide material for the drive to Penn House.

There are no finds to help with dating. There is a reference to a 'Miller End' in an extract from the Penn Manor Court Rolls of AD 1481 but there is no way of connecting the reference to the mound in question. The mound is clearly

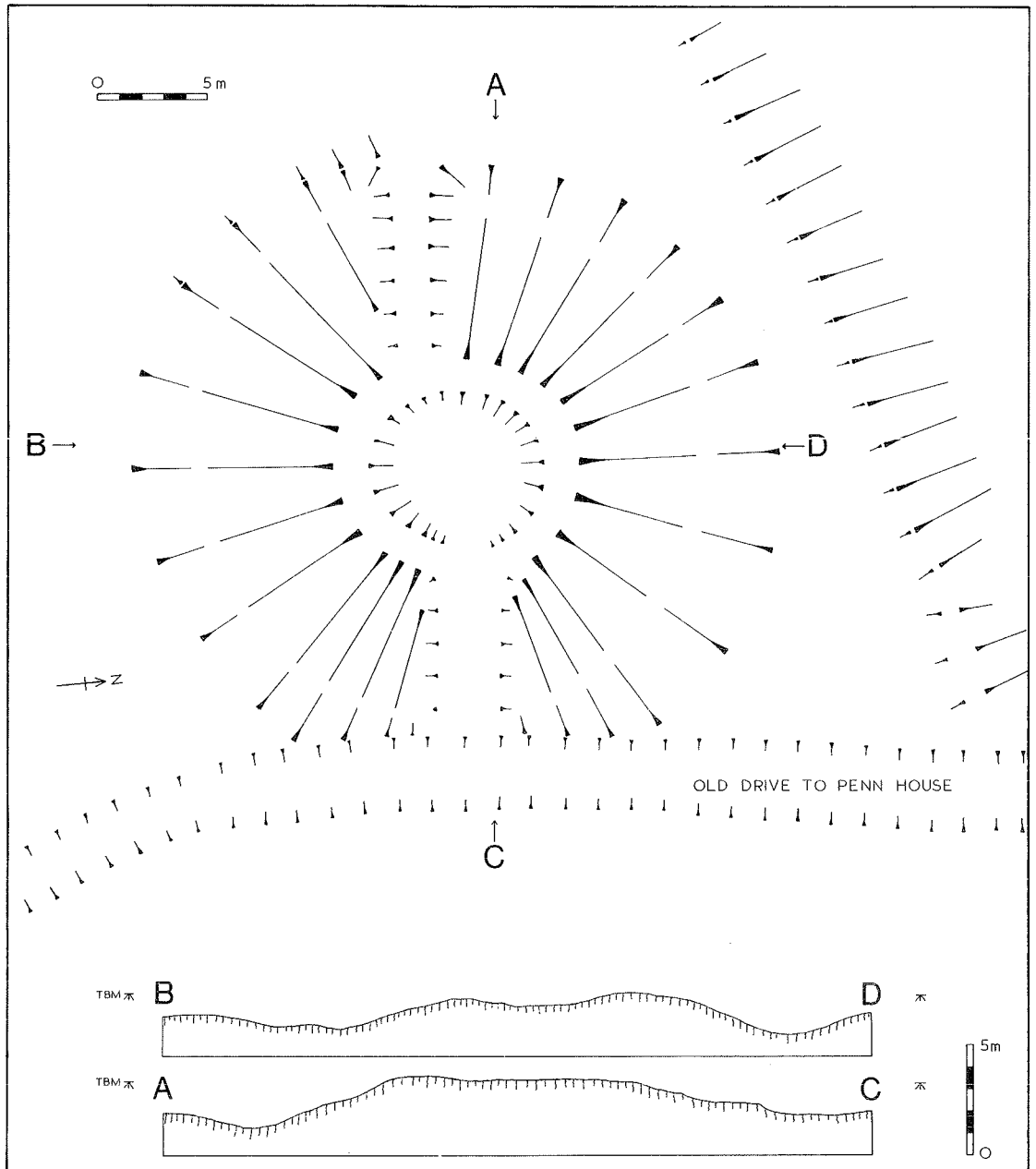


Fig. 1. Windmill mound, Penn Bottom.

older than the drive to Penn House and it is unlikely that the latter was constructed before 1536, which is when Penn House was built. The drive had certainly ceased to be used by the twentieth century when a new drive was built on a completely different alignment. There is no mention of a windmill on the 1838 tithe map though the field names attest its previous existence. Without further evidence a late medieval to early post-medieval date would seem appropriate.

The isolated position, and the abandonment of the drive to Penn House probably account for the mound passing unrecorded in the recently published survey of Bucks windmills.¹

Acknowledgements

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Pauline and Stanley Cauvain

REFERENCE

1. Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Group, 'Buckinghamshire Windmills', *Recs. Bucks* 20 (1978) 516-24.

(It is hoped that a future volume of *Records* will carry a detailed discussion by Miles Green of the historical evidence for the origin and date of this monument. *Ed.*)

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN EARLY VICTORIAN WOLVERTON

The reality of religious observance in England in the early part of Victoria's reign was far from the image of piety often associated with the period. It left much to be desired. In 1851 the population of England and Wales was nearly eighteen million. According to the religious census held on Mothering Sunday in the middle of Lent 1851 about seven million attended divine worship. A considerable number of these attended twice or even three times on that Sunday. It is impossible to say how many worshippers there were; certainly it was much less than seven million. It is also a fact that many people worshipped very irregularly.

In addition the quality of worship left much to be desired, and this applied to churches of all denominations. Clergymen came in for much well deserved criticism.

In 1840 Hugh Stowell Brown came to work in Wolverton at the engine and carriage works of the London and Birmingham Railway Company. He was an earnest young man, a keen

Christian, and a shrewd observer of the contemporary religious scene.

Brown estimated that there were 500 hands in the workshops: a mixed group of Londoners, Lancashiremen, Yorkshiremen, Scotchmen (the contemporary spelling), Welshmen and Irishmen. He claimed he knew most of the 500, and of those he reckoned no more than two percent ever went to worship. 'There was ample church accommodation and few counter-attractions. After a week of being shut up in the close and unhealthy atmosphere of smoke, the only alternative was the fields. It must, however, be admitted and there was very little to induce these men to go either to church or chapel.' Most of the neighbouring clergy were gentlemen who followed the hounds. The parson at Stony Stratford had spent some years in prison as an insolvent debtor; he must have been very mindful of this: 'for as he droned through the service, he grew animated and earnest in praying that those evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or *man* worketh against us

be brought to nought.' All Brown could remember of this man was his extreme stupidity and dullness, and that loud emphasis of the word 'man'.

'Many more of the clergy were hopelessly in debt, and were held in very little esteem. There was not one for ten miles around who could preach so as to interest any mortal creature'. One of them, a great fox-hunter, was a magistrate, who occasionally fined a railway employee for trespass or for poaching, and of course was hated by all the stationmen.

The attendance at the churches was very poor; but railwaymen were not the only non-church goers. Not one farmer or farmservant out of ten was often seen within the consecrated walls of a church or chapel. The congregation of Old Wolverton Church (not to be confused with the new Wolverton church, which owes its establishment, very largely, to the railway company, and where the Revd George Weight, MA had a very distinguished ministry) was seldom a score, and considering what a 'dismal fool' the parson was, Brown wondered there were so many. The priest seldom preached; he made some attempt at reading a sermon once in two or three weeks, and that was once too often. He mumbled the incomparable liturgy in a most atrocious manner, the object evidently being to get through the thing as soon as he could. There was only one service on the Sunday and the parson and the clerk usually had it all to themselves.

The state of nonconformity in the district was not much better. At Newport Pagnell there was an Independent (Congregational) Minister, a Mr Bull. But Newport Pagnell was a four-mile walk from Wolverton. At Stony Stratford there were two small chapels: an Independent and a Baptist. The Independent Minister sang mournfully through his nose and was very dull and prosy. The Baptist Minister, a Mr Forster, was a man of considerable ability and a good

preacher. There was a Methodist Chapel also in the town, 'but it was only a poor little thatched cottage'. (This is not to be confused with a fine Wesleyan Chapel built with not a little assistance from the Railway Company a few years later.) 'There was nothing attractive about any of these places.'

According to Brown 'the first amenity provided by the London and Birmingham Railway Company was a public house called Hell's Kitchen'. (The author has found no record of this public house in the *Minutes* of the various committees of the London and Birmingham Railway Co.) It was the custom of all newcomers to 'stand their round' in this hostelry, which was always full of mechanics, navvies, labourers, and tramps of all kinds. In the dinner hour a hundred men would be in there. In Wolverton itself, when the railway came there was no church, no school and no reading room. But this state of affairs did not last long. The railway company were soon to build houses (only recently demolished), to endow a church and provide material assistance to a Wesleyan Chapel, to install a rector, build schools for girls and boys, and set up a reading room and a dispensary as well as making considerable efforts to beautify the environment. Clearly the Directors of the London and Birmingham Railway Company did have a sense of responsibility towards its employees, on a par with, but less well known than the Rowntrees, Cadburys and Levers with their model villages.

This note is based on W. S. Caine's biography of his father-in-law, *Hugh Stowell Brown*, chapter 9 (c.1880). A statue of H. S. Brown is normally to be seen in Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral. Brown was noted for his ecumenical views. I am indebted to the Revd M. E. Rudall, MA (Oxon), minister of Cecil Road Baptist Church, Enfield, formerly of Liverpool for drawing my attention to W. S. Caine's book.

Peter S. Richards